VICTIM-BLAMING AS NORMATIVE: EXAMINING PRESCRIPTIVE AND DESCRIPTIVE NORMS REGARDING VICTIM-BLAMING

A Dissertation

by

STACEY M. RIECK

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Chair of Committee,	Phia S. Salter
Committee Members,	Joshua Hicks
	Heather Lench
	Kristan Poirot
Head of Department,	Heather Lench

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ABSTRACT

This research examines whether there is a normative component to victim-blaming. Social norms refer to social rules or guidelines that guide behaviors, beliefs, and attitudes. According to the Focus Theory of Normative Conduct, social norms can take two forms. Prescriptive norms identify the behaviors and attitudes that members of a particular culture should engage in, while descriptive norms reflect the behaviors and attitudes people actually engage in. These studies used three paradigms to explore whether there are social norms regarding victim-blaming and whether there was consistency between prescriptive versus descriptive norms. Derived from the Focus Theory of Normative Conduct, I hypothesized that participants would evaluate victim-blaming as unlikeable (reflecting a prescriptive norm to avoid victim-blaming), but as an effective method of evaluating victims and their situations (reflecting a descriptive norm to engage in victim-blaming). These hypotheses were partially supported. The pilot and Study 1 found that participants reported higher levels of victim-blaming when asked to present themselves as unlikeable, but lower levels of victim-blaming when asked to present themselves as likeable. Contrary to hypotheses, Study 1 additionally found that participants reported higher levels of victim-blaming when presenting themselves as incompetent versus competent. Studies 2 and 3 conceptually replicated these results through an alternative paradigm in which participants evaluated an ostensible third party based on his/her responses to a victim-blaming questionnaire. Results indicated that participants evaluated a low victim-blaming target as more likeable (Study 2, Study 3).

However, results regarding competence were inconsistent: Study 2 found no difference in competence ratings between high and low victim-blaming, while Study 3 revealed that low victim-blaming targets were perceived as more competent. Finally, Study 4 investigated whether victim-blaming influenced perceptions of an individual's qualification for leadership positions. Results suggested that potential candidates who engaged in low (versus high) levels of victim-blaming were perceived as more suitable for the position. Moreover, low victim-blaming candidates were perceived as both more likeable and more competent.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Victim-blaming refers to the tendency to ascribe blame or responsibility for a negative outcome to the individual who experienced it. It occurs despite the victim's innocence or surrounding contextual issues (e.g., "I walked home because I was too intoxicated to drive.") Victim-blaming has been found to play a role in how individuals think about, evaluate, and determine responsibility for a wide range of situations (e.g., accidents, illness, natural disasters, sexual assault; Callan, Ellard, & Nicol, 2006; Hafer & Bègue, 2005; Hirschberger, 2006; Howard, 1984; Williams, 1984). Thus, after experiencing a negative event, individuals may be 're-victimized' by onlookers who assume that the victim was somehow deserving, responsible, or otherwise caused the event to occur.

While the term 'victim-blaming' may refer to outright attributions of blame or responsibility (e.g., "She shouldn't have walked home alone"), it is not always this explicit. Instead, victim-blaming can take multiple forms including derogation of the victim's character (e.g., "She's so irresponsible, she had this coming") or a subtler version in which onlookers attempt to dissociate or distance themselves from the victim and/or the incident (Hafer & Bègue, 2005; Warner, VanDeursen, & Pope, 2012). Thus, in this paper, I define victim-blaming as a pattern of responding to a person that includes negative evaluations, negative attributions, ascriptions of blame or responsibility, and/or dissociating from the person as a result of their experience.

Victim-blaming can have very real consequences for victims. Prior research suggests that the experience of secondary victimization reduces coping and well-being (Yamawaki, 2007). Victims may internalize these beliefs that they were somehow at fault or deserving of what happened, leading to decreases in self-worth and increases in depression or anxiety (Grubb & Turner, 2012). Further, victims may feel isolated from their community or support network, factors that are important in coping and recovery (Ullman, 1996). These negative effects are not restricted to the victim, however. Fear of not being believed, blamed, or mistreatment can discourage future victims of violent crime to come forward (Grubb & Turner, 2012), especially in cases involving ambiguity (e.g., acquaintance rape). This maintains a culture of stigmatization surrounding issues of rape or sexual assault (Grubb & Turner, 2012). Moreover, perpetrators are not likely to be caught allowing for the opportunity to reoffend.

1.1 Theories of Victim-blaming

Most scholarly explanations for victim-blaming are rooted in theories of threat, either to personal safety or to worldview. When we encounter a situation in which an individual is harmed or victimized, it serves as an unsettling personal reminder that we could suffer a similar fate (Coppolillo, 2006; Hirschberger, 2006; Walster, 1966). If we can identify what it was that he or she did wrong, then we can be sure that we will be able to avoid a similar experience. Victim-blaming allows for us to reinforce our sense of safety by reinterpreting the incident. Evidence supporting this is found in research that suggests that we tend to engage in higher levels of victim-blaming when the incident appears to be more relevant to the self. For example, Aguiar and colleagues (2008)

found that we tend to blame victims more when they are more similar to ourselves or when the incident occurred physically close to our home or work. These results suggest that when incidents occur nearer to us, they are perceived as more relevant, and thus more threatening, to our physical selves.

Other explanations rely on threats to worldview. Research investigating explanations for secondary victimization is frequently rooted in Just World Theory (Lerner, 1971). Just World Theory suggests that innocent victims threaten system-justifying beliefs such as belief in a just world. Belief in a Just World (BJW) refers to the perception of the world as safe, stable, predictable, meaningful – and ultimately just (Bal & van den Bos, 2012; Hafer, 2000a; Lerner, 1971, 1997). That is, we are motivated to believe that our nature and/or behavior will dictate our life outcomes and experiences. Good things should happen to good people and bad things should happen to bad people. This belief stems from the motivation to perceive the world as predictable and that the world makes sense (Alves & Correia, 2010; Lerner, 1977; Dalbert, 1999). When bad things happen to an undeserving person, it threatens our sense of control, making the world feel unpredictable and uncertain. In order to restore our just world beliefs, we may reinterpret the situation in a way that suggests that the victim was deserving of his/her outcome.

Individual differences in ideology and worldviews have also been found to be associated with varying levels of victim-blaming. Personal ideology, according to Tomkins (1963) refers to a set of beliefs that organize our worldviews and define how we should behave and interact with the world around us. He describes two primary

dimensions of ideology: normative and humanistic. The normative dimension describes the extent to which individuals believe that people, in general, need to be controlled and shaped. People are expected to control their primary drives (e.g., hunger), motivations (e.g., achievement), and emotions in order to conform to societal norms and rules. It is through adherence to these norms that a person earns his/her value or is 'good.' In contrast, the humanistic dimension is focused on personal growth, individuality, and creativity. This perspective affords value and respect to human experience itself. Individuals should be encouraged to behave in ways that serve to meet their emotional and physical needs, regardless of one's adherence to group norms.

Given that these two dimensions offer vastly different perspectives on human nature, it should come as no surprise that they may influence how we evaluate victims. In general, victim-blaming tends to be higher in individuals with a high normative versus humanistic ideology (Coppolillo, 2006; Tomkins, 1963; Walster, 1966; Williams, 1984). Williams (1984) found that individuals who subscribed to a more normative versus humanistic perspective were more likely to blame an individual for losing welfare benefits (Study 1) and for being the victim of theft (Study 2). Coppolillo (2006) found that individuals with a highly normative ideology were more likely to attribute responsibility for a rape to the victim as well as derogated the victim more than those with a more humanistic ideology.

A conservative political ideology has also been found to be linked with a tendency to engage in more victim-blaming versus those with a more liberal political perspective (Anderson, Cooper, & Okamura, 1997; Coppolillo, 2006; Lambert &

Raichle, 2000; Skitka, 1999; Williams, 1984). For example, Lambert and Raichle (2000) conducted a study examining factors that were associated with victim-blaming. The researchers first measured self-reported political ideology among undergraduate students and then two months later, invited participants to take part in an ostensibly unrelated study. In that ostensibly unrelated study, participants were presented with a vignette describing an acquaintance rape. Immediately after the vignette, participants were asked to report how much both the assailant and the victim were a) to blame for the incident and b) responsible for the incident. Results found that conservativism was positively associated with blaming the victim of the assault.

Williams (1984) examined the association of political ideology on perceptions of responsibility for negative and/or harmful outcomes. In both studies, participants first completed a measure of liberal or conservative ideology and then were presented with a vignette describing a person whose welfare support was terminated (Study 1; Williams, 1984) or was the victim of theft (Study 2; Williams, 1984). Results of both studies found that conservative participants attributed more blame and responsibility to victims as compared to more liberal participants. Further, conservative participants were more likely to derogate victims, express disgust, and less likely sympathize with the victims. It should be noted that it is not conservativism as ideology, *per se*, that is leading to higher victim-blaming, but rather the amalgamation of underlying belief structures (e.g., personal responsibility, protestant work ethic, normative (versus humanistic) ideologies) that make it more likely.

These related concepts all stress the importance of personal responsibility in how individuals move through their world. That is, they hold that people, themselves, are responsible for how they move the world and the outcomes they experience – both good and bad. Thus, individuals with higher levels of these beliefs are more likely to hold victims responsible for their outcomes.

1.2 Victim-blaming as a Social Norm

Prior research has focused on the role of threat (e.g., personal safety) and ideology (e.g., protestant work ethic) in victim-blaming. This research seeks to examine secondary victimization from an alternative perspective. Specifically, I propose that one explanation for why we may blame victims is that we think it is normative, and socially, the right thing to do. Social norms refer to socially-sanctioned scripts or expectations regarding how we should behave or believe in certain circumstances (Burnett & Bonnici, 2003; Gangloff, Soudan, & Auzoult, 2014; Kallgren, Reno, & Cialdini, 2000; McDonald & Crandall, 2015). In cases of uncertainty or complexity, we may refer to these guidelines to direct our behavior and attitudes. Thus, I suggest that, in the United States, we have 'rules' that guide how we go about thinking about victims and their circumstances and that these norms may stem from beliefs regarding personal responsibility.

Several studies provide support to suggest that beliefs and worldviews linked with victim-blaming (e.g., belief in a just world, internality) may be normative in some Western cultures (e.g., United States, Portugal, and the France; Alves & Correia, 2008; Dubois & Beauvois, 2005; Jellison & Green, 1981; Stern & Manifold, 1977). Norms are

cultural in nature; they carry positive social value in that they describe behaviors and attitudes that are perceived as good or beneficial across a wide range of situations (Alves & Correia, 2010; Dubois & Beauvois, 2005). Thus, when people behave in ways that are consistent with these norms, they are more likely to be perceived positively. For example, Stern and Manifold (1977) asked undergraduate students in the United States to complete a measure assessing internal-external locus of control. Later, participants were asked to score and review their own responses, as well as review the responses of an ostensible other participant. After reviewing both scores, participants were asked to evaluate themselves and the other participants with respect to intelligence, competence, stability, admirability, recklessness, and unpleasantness. Results found that more positive ratings were given to targets when their score indicated internal (versus external) locus of control, regardless of participants' own belief in locus of control.

Similar results were found by Jellison and Green (1981): undergraduate students in the United States were asked to read the results of a 'personality test' of an ostensible prior participant and to rate this person on a series of traits (e.g., admirable, friendly, good, likeable). Participants randomly received one of four questionnaire packets that had been completed to reflect low, moderate, high, and very high internal locus of control. Results indicated that participants rated the prior participant more positively with increasing levels of internality. In a follow-up study, Jellison and Green (1981) asked participants to complete Rotter's (1966) locus of control measure in either a way to make themselves appear likeable or unlikeable. Their results indicated that participants gave significantly more responses indicating internal locus of control in the

likeable versus unlikeable condition. The authors suggest that not only indicates the presence of the norm, but also that participants were aware of it and able to use this knowledge to alter how they present themselves to others.

The above findings extend to Western cultures outside of the United States. Instead of locus of control, Alves and Correia (2008) asked Portuguese university students to complete one of two BJW scales (General Belief in a Just World Scale; Dalbert, Montada, & Schmitt, 1987 or the Personal Belief in a Just World Scale; Dalbert, 1999) in a way which presented themselves in either a positive or a negative light. Results indicated that participants reported higher BJW scores in the positive versus the negative condition, regardless of the specific scale completed. In a follow-up study, participants were presented with the ostensible responses of a prior participant, they gave more positive evaluations and were more interested in meeting targets who expressed high versus low BJW.

Finally, Dubois and Beauvois (2005) found that three aspects of individualism (i.e., self-sufficiency, internality, and individual anchoring) are also normative in France. Individual anchoring, defining the self in regards to beliefs or values rather than group membership, has not been linked with a greater tendency to engage in victim-blaming. However, both self-sufficiency (individuals are responsible for meeting their own needs and navigating their world) and internality (the tendency to focus on internal rather than external factors when explaining an individual's behavior and outcomes) can be implicated in victim-blaming in that they both stress the role of personal responsibility in determining an individuals' outcomes and experiences. Dubois and Beauvois (2005)

found that French participants rated targets described as more individualistic (versus collectivistic) more positively in terms of both desirability (e.g., likeable, honest) and utility (e.g., competent, intelligent).

Together, these findings suggest that individuals from Western cultures may evaluate individuals who more strongly endorse belief systems or values that stress the idea of personal responsibility more positively; this suggests that this focus on personal responsibility is perceived as useful within these cultures in guiding behavior and interpreting ambiguous situations. If, as prior research suggests, these beliefs are normative, we likely rely upon them when evaluating ambiguous circumstances, such as when an individual is victimized. I propose that this consistent reliance on personal responsibility for victim evaluation, may have led to the establishment of victim-blaming itself as a norm.

1.3 Focus Theory of Normative Conduct

Social norms refer to culturally accepted attitudes, beliefs, and behavior. Norms help to direct and guide behavior in that they illustrate what is valued and expected from individuals within a particular culture (McDonald & Crandall, 2015; Gangloff et al., 2014). Cialdini's Focus Theory of Normative Conduct (Cialdini, Reno, & Kallgren, 1990; Kallgren et al., 2000; Reno, Cialdini, & Kallgren, 1993) differentiates between descriptive and prescriptive norms. Prescriptive norms refer to societal rules regarding appropriate behavior. These rules define how we *should* behave or values that we *should* endorse. In contrast, descriptive norms refer to the attitudes and behaviors that individuals actually display. While prescriptive norms *prescribe* the appropriate

behavior (i.e., define what should be done), descriptive norms *describe* how individuals actually behave – regardless of explicit social rules. For example, a prescriptive norm in the U.S. is to drive at or below the speed limit. We are expected – and expect others – to refrain from driving above the posted limit. In practice, however, we find that individuals frequently drive 5, 10, or even 15 miles faster than the rule dictates (the descriptive norm).

The above speeding example not only demonstrates the difference between descriptive and prescriptive norms, but also illustrates a key feature of these two types of norms: they are not always in congruence. Focus Theory not only differentiates between descriptive and prescriptive norms, but also identifies when norms will influence behavior. Kallgren and colleagues (2000) investigated the influence of descriptive and prescriptive norms regarding littering on predicting littering behavior. Results suggested that norms primarily influence behavior when they are both salient and relevant to current behavioral options. That is, if a norm is not focal or appears to be irrelevant to one's current options, it will have little effect on behavior. In cases in which the descriptive and prescriptive norms offer conflicting information regarding the appropriate behavior, whichever is most salient will trump the other (Burger et al., 2010). Further, descriptive and prescriptive norms have differing influence on future behavior. As prescriptive norms reflect overarching societal values that extend beyond context, they are more likely to generalize to new situations. In contrast, descriptive norms tend to have greater strength in producing a behavior when the environment or context is similar to the context in the salient norm (Reno et al., 1993).

Descriptive and prescriptive norms also differ in directing attention to alternate motivations in determining the appropriate behavior for a given situation. As prescriptive norms are rule-focused, they often represent key values within a society. Using our speeding example, the prescriptive norm to follow the speed limit may, in some ways, represent a cultural value of respecting authority and/or government regulations. Thus, prescriptive norms reflect the culturally accepted 'good' or 'right' way to believe or behave. Individuals who adhere to prescriptive norms tend to be rated highly on traits or qualities related to liking or warmth (e.g., honesty, likeability, pleasantness); we tend to like individuals who reflect our cultural beliefs and values (Dubois & Beauvois, 2005; Gilibert & Cambon, 2003). Descriptive norms, instead, reflect efficient methods of navigating the world around us (e.g., "if everyone else is doing it, it must be a sensible thing to do," Cialdini, as cited in Cialdini et al., 1990). Thus, while individuals who conform to prescriptive norms are likely to be judged highly in terms of liking or warmth, those who conform to descriptive norms are more likely to be rated highly on traits related to utility or competence (e.g., competent, intelligent, dynamic; Dubois & Beauvois, 2005). Given these differences, prior research has relied on these distinctions in determining whether a) a particular phenomenon is a norm and b) whether this norm is descriptive or prescriptive.

1.4 Methods for Studying Norms

Prior research has established three common methods for determining the normativity of a particular behavior or belief: the self-presentation paradigm, the judge's paradigm, and the legislative paradigm (see Gangloff et al., 2014). These three

methods provide converging evidence for the presence of a particular norm by addressing cognitive components (e.g., normative awareness), social components (e.g., social value), and contextual application (e.g., choosing someone for a leadership position), respectively.

1.4.1 Self-presentation paradigm. The self-presentation paradigm asks participants to complete a series of questionnaires in a way to present themselves in either a positive or a negative light (Gangloff et al., 2014; Gilibert & Cambon, 2003). When participants present themselves in a positive way, that is, a way get others to like them, this should reflect the prescriptive norm. Given that prescriptive norms are based on underlying social values, we should like individuals more when they adhere to these norms. Thus, the responses of participants asked to present themselves in a positive, likeable way should reflect prescriptive norms. In contrast, participants asked to present themselves in a negative, dislikeable way should respond to the questionnaire in a way that is non-normative (Gangloff et al., 2014; Gilibert & Cambon, 2003).

1.4.2 Judge's paradigm. The judge's paradigm asks participants to evaluate individuals based on their responses to a questionnaire (Gangloff et al., 2014; Gilibert & Cambon, 2003). Participants are presented with a packet of responses from an ostensible third party. In reality, these responses are created to reflect high or low scores on a particular construct. For example, a participant may be presented with a completed version of the belief in a just world scale, which has been completed in a way to indicate high belief in a just world. The participant is then asked to report their impressions of the person who ostensibly completed the measure. Generally, participants should

provide more positive ratings of individuals whose responses are congruent with norms. However, by evaluating the target in terms of both competence and likeability, researchers are able to determine whether the target's beliefs are more in line with descriptive versus prescriptive norms (Gangloff et al., 2014; Gilibert & Cambon, 2003).

1.4.3 Legislative paradigm. The legislative paradigm is similar to the judge's paradigm in that participants are asked to review the responses of an ostensible third person or compare two individuals based on their responses (Gangloff et al., 2014; Gilibert & Cambon, 2003). However, instead of evaluating the responses in terms of a third variable (e.g., competence and likeability), participants are asked to determine if the target is suitable for a particular position (e.g., student council president, whether they would hire them for a job, etc.). In cases in which participants are asked to compare two targets based on their responses, participants are asked to report which they believe would be better suited for the position. Given that the emphasis in the legislative paradigm is the perceived ability of the target, this method can be used to determine whether a pattern of responses is reflective of a descriptive norm (due to the relationship between descriptive norms and social utility).

1.5 The Current Research

The goal of this series of studies is to investigate whether victim-blaming is normative. Victim-blaming is strongly linked with ideologies and worldviews that are normative in US culture; therefore, victim-blaming itself may have become normative due to its relationship with those worldviews (e.g., belief in a just world, internality). Focus theory of normative conduct identifies two 'types' of norms: those that direct how

we *should* behave or what we *should* believe (prescriptive norms) and those that describe how people *actually* behave or what they *actually* believe. While I argue that victim-blaming may have become normative, I suggest that the prescriptive and descriptive norms regarding victim-blaming are in conflict.

In the past several years, there has been quite a bit of media attention to victimization. For example, we have heard reports regarding the prevalence of sexual assault on college campuses (Cantor & Fisher, 2015) and the events in Ferguson, Missouri and Steubenville, Ohio. This media attention may be creating a changing atmosphere regarding how we should treat and react to victims. That is, the media may be bringing attention to the detrimental effect victim-blaming has: poorer outcomes, poor coping, and decreased likelihood of report incidents. This could be leading to the development of a prescriptive norm against victim-blaming. Despite this attention, however, there is little evidence to suggest that the incidence or prevalence of victim-blaming is actually decreasing. This suggests there may be conflict between the prescriptive norm (we should not blame victims) and the descriptive norm (we continue to blame victims).

The current studies seek to explore whether there are social norms which guide victim-blaming, and if so, if there are differences in prescriptive and descriptive norms. Studies 1 and 2 used the self-presentation paradigm in order to provide preliminary evidence of a prescriptive norm regarding victim-blaming. Studies 3 and 4 extended findings by using the judge's paradigm in order to examine whether there was also a descriptive norm regarding victim-blaming, and whether this norm conflicted with the

prescriptive norm. Finally, Study 5 used the legislative paradigm to further investigate the presence of descriptive norms regarding victim-blaming.

2. PILOT STUDY

The goal of the Pilot Study was to provide preliminary evidence of a prescriptive norm regarding victim-blaming. Prior research suggests that when individuals conform to prescriptive norms, they are generally perceived as more likeable (Gangloff et al., 2014; Gilibert & Cambon, 2003; Jellison & Green, 1981). Participants completed a victim-blaming questionnaire and told to respond in a way which presented themselves as likeable, unlikeable, or were given no instructions (control condition). If there is a prescriptive norm to victim blame, participants should report higher levels of victim-blaming and more negative evaluations of the victim in the unlikeable versus likeable condition. In contrast, if the prescriptive norm suggests that victim-blaming is inappropriate or wrong, we should see lower attributions of blame and more positive evaluations of the victim in the likeable versus unlikeable condition.

2.1 Method

2.1.1 Participants. Participants were seventy-five undergraduates from a large public university in the southern United States. The majority of participants were women (61%) and the average age was 18.61 years old (*SD*=.73). Sixty percent of participants identified as White, 20% as Latinx, 8% as Asian or Asian-American, 3% as Black or African-American, 7% indicated more than one race/ethnicity, 1% indicated some other race or ethnicity and 1% declined to respond.

2.1.2 Materials and Procedure. Participants were first instructed that in this study, they would not be responding "as themselves." Instead, they were to complete

questionnaires in a way to present themselves as likeable or unlikeable. A third condition did not provide instructions to the participants regarding how to respond to the questionnaire (see Appendix A). After these instructions, participants read a short vignette describing an incident in which a young woman was sexually assaulted while attending a party with friends. Immediately after reading the vignette, they completed a questionnaire regarding attitudes towards the victim. In order to explore potential moderators, participants then completed a measure of free will. Finally, they completed a brief demographics questionnaire and were dismissed.

2.1.2.1 Vignette. Participants were presented with a description of an event in which a young woman was sexually assaulted (see Appendix B). In order to maintain realism, the description was modeled after campus crime alerts which are periodically emailed to students at the university in order to inform them of recently reported crimes.

2.1.2.2 Victim-blaming. Victim-blaming was measured with three scales adapted from Goldenberg and Forgas (2012) and Hafer (2000b): attribution of responsibility, victim derogation, and dissociation (see Appendix C). The responsibility subscale (α=.96) was made up of ten items and asked participants to assess how responsible the victim was for the assault and was made up of ten items (e.g., "She is responsible for what happened," "I believe what happened to her was caused by her own behavior"). Responses were given on seven-point scale (*1=strongly disagree; 7=strongly agree*) and averaged to create a composite responsibility score (M=3.84, SD=1.92). Higher scores indicated greater attribution of responsibility to the victim.

The derogation subscale (α=.95) was made up of eight items and measured the extent to which participants derogated the character of the victim. Participants evaluated the victim on seven attributes using a seven-point bipolar scale. Items were: intelligent-unintelligent, competent-incompetent, likeable-unlikeable, responsible-irresponsible, careful-careless, honest-dishonest, and modest-arrogant. Responses were averaged to create a composite derogation score where higher scores indicated more derogation of the victim (*M*=4.54, *SD*=1.39). Participants additionally indicated their overall impression of the victim on a seven points scale (*1=extremely positive; 7=extremely negative).*

Finally, the dissociation subscale (α=.83) was made up of six items and assessed how much participants attempted to distance themselves from the victim. Participants responded to six items (e.g., "I would consider hanging out with this person," "This incident could happen to me or a close friend") on a seven-point scale (*1=strongly agree; 7=strongly disagree).* Responses were averaged to create a composite dissociation score where higher scores indicated greater distancing from the victim (*M*=4.63, *SD*=1.34).

2.1.2.3 Manipulation check. In order to ensure that participants responded to the victim-blaming measures in the way that they were instructed to (i.e., in a way to make themselves appear likeable or in a way to make themselves appear unlikeable), a single item asked participants to report how they responded to the victim-blaming questionnaire (see Appendix D).

2.1.2.4 Free will. As an exploratory measure, the Free Will and Determinism Scale (FAD+, Paulhus & Carey, 2011; see Appendix E) was included to examine the relationship between belief in free will and victim-blaming. The FAD+ is made up of 27 items designed to measure the extent to which individuals identify four sources (free will, scientific determinism, fatalistic determinism, and unpredictability) as explanations for behaviors, life events, and outcomes. Responses were given on a seven-point scale (*1=strongly disagree; 7=strongly agree*). Scores for each of the subscales were created by averaging responses on relevant items. The free will subscale (α=.85, *M*=5.26, *SD*=.86) consisted of seven items and measured the extent to which participants believed that people are ultimately responsible for their decisions and behavior, e.g., "people have complete control over the decisions they make." The scientific determinism subscale (α=.65, *M*=3.76, *SD*=.84) consisted of seven items and assessed the extent to which participants believed that science can explain behaviors and outcomes, e.g., "people's biological makeup determines their talents and personality. The fatalistic determinism subscale (α=.80, *M*=3.53, *SD*=1.24) consisted of five items measuring the extent to which participants believed that their future and outcomes had been predetermined by fate, e.g., "I believe the future has already been determined by fate." Finally, the unpredictability subscale (α=.60, *M*=4.64, *SD*=.70) consisted of eight items and assessed the extent to which participants believed that events and outcomes are unpredictable and due to chance, e.g., "chance events seem to be the major cause of human history."

2.2 Results

Eighteen participants (24%) reported that they did not complete the victim-blaming measures as instructed. Results are reported both with and without these participants.

2.2.1 Primary Analyses. First, a Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) was conducted on the full sample as an omnibus test of whether there was an overall impact of self-presentation condition on victim-blaming (as measured on three subscales: responsibility, derogation, and dissociation; see Figure 1). Results indicated a significant effect of self-presentation condition on victim-blaming, Wilk's λ=.31, $F_{(6,140)}$=18.43, p<.001, η_p^2=.44.

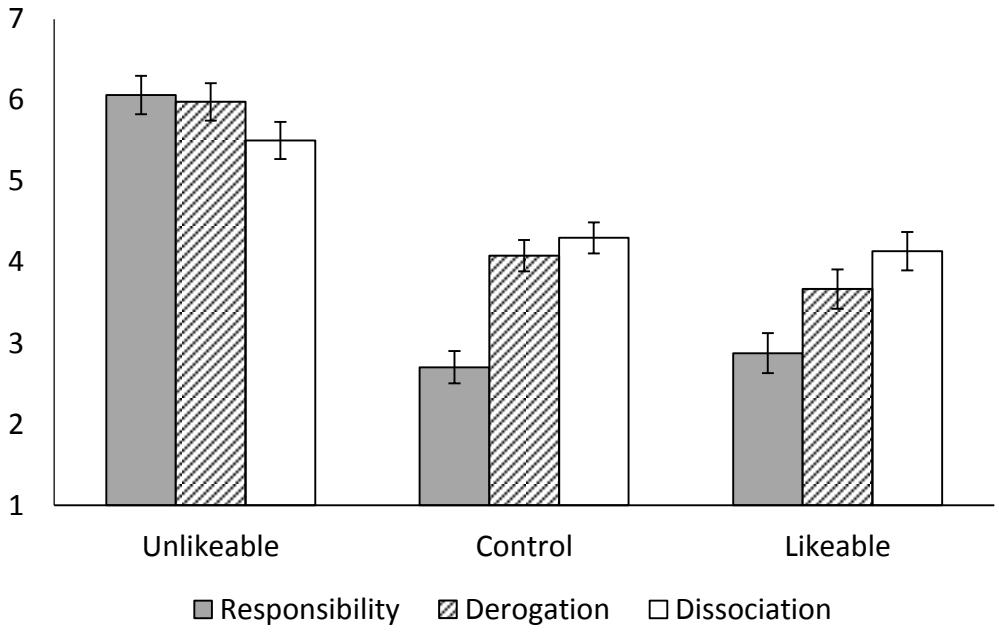

Figure 1. Pilot Study. Victim evaluations based on self-presentation condition. Error bars represent standard errors.

A Univariate Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) indicated a significant difference in mean responsibility scores between the three conditions, $F_{(2,72)}$=64.93, p<.001, η_p^2=.64. Post-hoc analyses using Tukey's HSD indicated that participants in the unlikeable condition (M=6.06, SD=1.08) attributed significantly more responsibility than either participants in the likeable condition (M=2.88, SD=1.39, p<.001) or the control condition (M=2.70, SD=.95, p<.001). There was no difference in responsibility attribution in the likeable versus control conditions (p=.855).

There was also a significant difference in victim derogation between the three conditions, $F_{(2,72)}$=39.52, p<.001, η_p^2=.52. Post-hoc analyses using Tukey's HSD revealed that participants in the unlikeable condition (M=5.98, SD=1.07) derogated the victim significantly more than those in either the likeable (M=3.67, SD=1.18, p<.001) or the control condition (M=4.08, SD=.55, p<.001). There was no difference in victim derogation between likeable and control conditions (p=.291).

Similar to the results for responsibility and derogation, a univariate ANOVA revealed a significant difference between conditions in the extent to which participants dissociated from the victim, $F_{(2,72)}$=9.35, p<.001, η_p^2=.21. Post-hoc analyses using Tukey's HSD found that participants in the unlikable condition (M=5.50, SD=1.39) dissociated significantly more than those in either the likeable (M=4.13, SD=1.12, p<.001) or the control condition (M=4.30, SD=1.11, p=.002). There was no difference in distancing between the likeable and control conditions (p=.877).

Second, a MANOVA was conducted that considered how participants responded to the manipulation check. After excluding participants who failed the manipulation

check, the overall pattern of results was similar. Results indicated a significant effect of self-presentation condition on victim-blaming, Wilk's λ=.17, $F_{(6,104)}$=24.70, p<.001, η_p^2=.59.

A Univariate Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) indicated a significant difference in mean responsibility scores between the three conditions, $F_{(2,54)}$=111.72, p<.001, η_p^2=.81. Post-hoc analyses using Tukey's HSD indicated that participants in the unlikeable condition (M=6.11, SD=1.01) attributed significantly more responsibility than either participants in the likeable condition (M=1.69, SD=.64, p<.001) or the control condition (M=2.70, SD=.95, p<.001). In contrast to when all participants were included, results additionally found that participants in the control condition reported significantly more responsibility that those in the likeable condition (p=.010).

There was also a significant difference in victim derogation between the three conditions, $F_{(2,54)}$=56.43, p<.001, η_p^2=.68. Post-hoc analyses using Tukey's HSD revealed that participants in the unlikeable condition (M=6.17, SD=.94) derogated the victim significantly more than those in either the likeable (M=2.93, SD=1.33, p<.001) or the control condition (M=4.08, SD=.55, p<.001). In contrast to when all participants were included, participants in the control condition derogated the victim significantly more than those in the likeable condition (p=.002).

There was also an effect of condition on distancing from the victim, $F_{(2,54)}$=12.04, p<.001, η_p^2=.31. Post-hoc analyses indicated that participants in the unlikeable condition (M=5.61, SD=1.44) dissociated significantly more from the victim than those in the

likeable (M=3.51, SD=1.03, p<.001) or control condition (M=4.30, SD=1.11, p=.002). There was no difference between the likeable or control condition (p=.193).

2.2.2 Exploratory Analyses. For the following exploratory analyses, the full sample was included. Paired-samples t-tests were conducted to examine whether participants differed in the extent to which they endorsed different methods of victim-blaming. Collapsing across condition, results revealed that participants were more likely to derogate (M=4.54, SD=1.39) than attribute responsibility to the victim (M=3.84, SD=1.92, $t_{(74)}$=-4.85, p<.001). Results also found that participants were more likely to dissociate from the victim (M=4.63, SD=1.34) versus attribute responsibility, $t_{(74)}$=-4.11, p<.001. There were no differences between derogation and dissociation from the victim, $t_{(74)}$=-.55, p=.585.

Bivariate correlations were conducted in order to determine whether belief in free will was associated with each of the victim-blaming subscales (see Table 1). As participants were instructed to complete the FAD+ with respect to their own beliefs, instead of attempting to portray a particular image of themselves, I did not expect a difference in the relationship between free will and victim-blaming between conditions. Results found that free will was not associated with attributions of responsibility (r = .16, p = .164), derogation (r = .02, p = .846), or dissociation (r = -.02, p = .843). The remaining three subscales on the Free Will and Determinism Scale (i.e., scientific determinism, fatalistic determinism, unpredictability; Paulhus & Carey, 2011) were similarly not significantly related to any of the victim-blaming subscales (ps≥.221).

Table 1. *Correlations between scores on the Free Will and Determinism Scale and victim-blaming, Pilot Study*

Condition	Free Will	Scientific Determinism	Fatalistic Determinism	Unpredictability
Overall				
Responsibility	.16	.07	-.12	-.06
Derogation	.02	.13	.06	-.05
Dissociation	-.02	.09	-.01	-.14
Control				
Responsibility	.22	-.07	-.32	.14
Derogation	-.17	-.08	-.27	-.22
Dissociation	-.16	-.09	-.27	-.35†
Likeable				
Responsibility	.31	.15	.32	.06
Derogation	.26	.35†	.32	.26
Dissociation	.11	.17	.33	.22
Unlikeable				
Responsibility	.19	-.05	-.23	-.21
Derogation	-.01	-.18	.26	-.03
Dissociation	.01	.14	.14	-.07

† $p \leq .089$

2.3 Discussion

When participants were asked to represent themselves in a way that was unlikeable, they reported higher levels of victim-blaming across all three measures (attribution of responsibility, derogation, dissociation) as compared to when they were asked to respond in a way that was likeable and when given no instructions. Further, when participants who failed the manipulation check were excluded from analysis, results suggested that when asked to respond in a way to encourage others to form a favorable opinion, participants displayed the lowest levels of victim-blaming. Individuals who adhere to prescriptive social norms are seen as more likeable and are

evaluated more positively than those who fail to conform to these norms. Thus, these results suggest a prescriptive norm to avoid victim-blaming.

One of the goals of the pilot was to test these methods and materials with an undergraduate sample. Using an ostensible Clery Report appeared to be an effective method of presenting a victimization scenario in that no participants reported disbelief. However, it should be noted that a large percentage of participants (24%) failed to complete the study as instructed. Thus, in Study 1, I made modifications to the procedure in an attempt to increase participant understanding and compliance with the instructions. Specifically, the instructions regarding how to respond to the victim-blaming questionnaire were not only presented at the top of each page, but also alone prior to the questionnaire. Moreover, these instructions were written in large, bolded, red font in order to attract attention. The procedure was also modified to include a script to be read prior to the start of this study. This script informed participants that the task they would be completing was a bit different from other studies they may have taken part in.

While descriptive norms were not explicitly tested in this study, there was preliminary evidence to suggest that victim-blaming may be descriptively normative. Participants in the control condition reported moderate levels of derogation and dissociation (although means in the control condition were significantly different from the positive condition only when participants who failed the manipulation check were excluded). Study 1 modified the methods to include an experimental condition aimed at exploring descriptive norms to address this limitation.

3. STUDY 1

Study 1 expanded upon the pilot by investigating both prescriptive and descriptive norms regarding victim-blaming. While prior evidence suggests that prescriptive norms are associated with perceptions of liking and warmth, descriptive norms have been linked to perceptions of competence (Burger et al., 2010; Cialdini et al., 1990; Reno et al., 1993) in that they are informative and serve to provide information about effective and efficient methods of navigating the world.

After entering the lab, undergraduate research assistants read a brief script informing participants that the study that they were about to take part in was a bit different from others. Because of this, they were told that they should pay special attention to any instruction in red font at the top of each page.

Participants were asked to respond to a victim-blaming questionnaire in one of four ways: to present themselves as likeable/unlikeable (prescriptive norm) or as competent/incompetent (descriptive norm). In a fifth condition, participants were given no instruction as to how to respond. Given the results of the pilot study, I expected that participants would report lower levels of victim-blaming when asked to present themselves as likeable versus unlikeable. As engaging in victim-blaming may reflect cultural norms regarding personal responsibility, I expected that victim-blaming behavior may be perceived as an effective method of interpreting a victim-related scenario. Thus, I expected that participants would report higher levels of victim-blaming when asked to present themselves as competent versus incompetent.

3.1 Method

3.1.1 Participants. Participants were three hundred and thirteen undergraduates from a large public university in the southern United States. The majority of participants were women (74%) and the mean age was 18.65 years old (*SD*=1.19). Sixty percent of participants identified as White, 16% as Latinx, 8% as Asian or Asian-American, 8% as Black or African-American, 8% as more than one race, and 1% indicated some other race or ethnicity.

3.1.2 Materials and Procedure. Similar to Study 1, participants were first instructed that in this study, they would not be responding as themselves. Instead, they were to complete questionnaires in a way to present themselves as likeable, unlikeable, competent, or incompetent (See Appendix A). A fifth condition served as a control condition by not providing instructions to participants regarding how to respond. After these instructions, participants read the same vignette and completed the same victim-blaming measures as in Study 1. Finally, they completed a brief demographics questionnaire and were dismissed.

3.1.2.1 Manipulation check. In order to ensure that participants responded to the victim-blaming measures in the way that they were instructed to (i.e., in a way to appear likeable, in a way to appear competent), a single item asked participants to report how they responded to the victim-blaming questionnaire (see Appendix D).

3.2 Results

One hundred and ten participants (35%) reported that they did not complete the victim-blaming measures as instructed. Results are reported both with and without these participants.

3.2.1 Primary Analyses. First, A MANOVA was conducted on the full sample as an omnibus test of whether there was an overall impact of self-presentation condition on victim-blaming (as measured on three subscales: responsibility, derogation, and dissociation). Results revealed a significant effect of self-presentation on victim-blaming, Wilk's λ=.42, $F_{(12,809.89)}$=26.51, p<.001, η_p^2=.25 (see Figure 2). Given the significant results of the omnibus test, the univariate effects were examined.

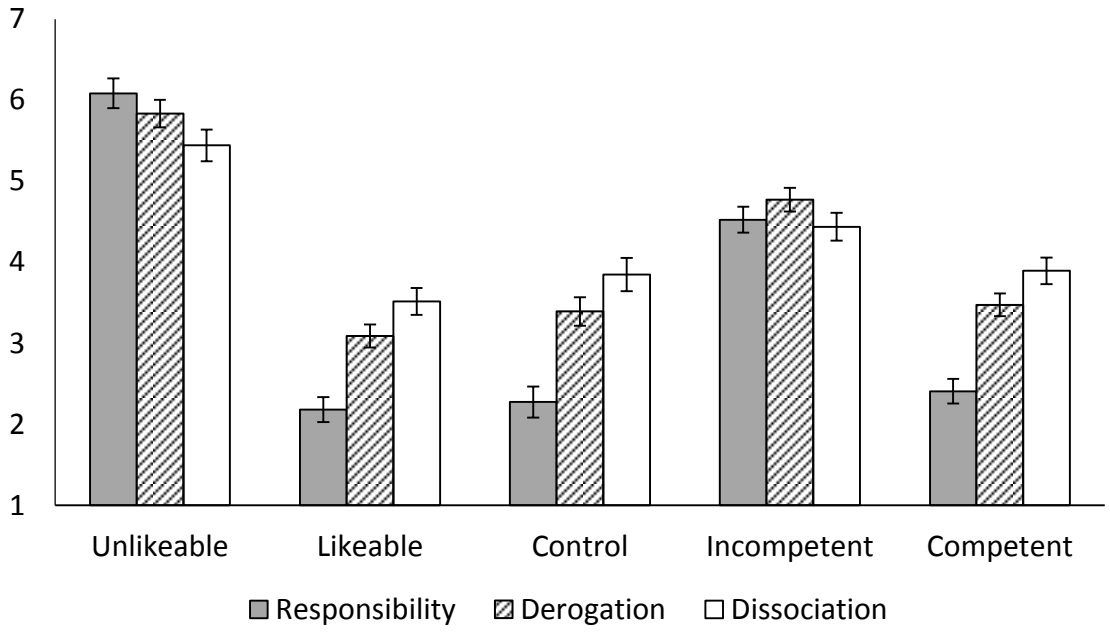

Figure 2. Study 1. Victim evaluations based on self-presentation condition. Error bars represent standard errors.

An ANOVA indicated a significant effect of self-presentation condition on attributions of responsibility, $F_{(4,308)}$=100.76, p<.001, η_p^2=.57. Post-hoc analyses using Tukey's HSD indicated that participants in the unlikeable condition (M=6.08, SD=1.53) attributed significantly more responsibility to the victim than those in the incompetent (M=4.52, SD=1.69, p<.001), competent (M=2.41, SD=1.04, p<.001), control (M=2.27, SD=1.14, p<.001, or likeable conditions (M=2.18, SD=1.08, p<.001). Participants in the incompetent also attributed significantly more responsibility than those in the competent (p<.001), control (p<.001), or likeable conditions (p<.001). All other comparisons were non-significant (ps≥.834; see Table 2).

Table 2. *Means and standard deviations for responsibility, derogation, and dissociation based on self-presentation condition, Study 1.*

	Victim-blaming Measure		
Condition	Responsibility	Derogation	Dissociation
Control	2.27 (1.14)[a]	3.39 (.98)[a]	3.85 (1.26)[a,b]
Likeable	2.18 (1.08)[a]	3.09 (1.10)[a]	3.52 (1.28)[a]
Unlikeable	6.08 (1.53)[b]	5.83 (1.50)[b]	5.44 (1.60)[c]
Competent	2.41 (1.04)[a]	3.47 (1.01)[a]	3.89 (1.28)[a,b]
Incompetent	4.52 (1.69)[c]	4.77 (1.41)[c]	4.44 (1.60)[b]

Note: means within the same column that share the same superscript are not significantly different from one another.

Results also indicated a significant difference in victim derogation between conditions, $F_{(4,308)}$=52.81, p<.001, η_p^2=.41. Post-hoc analyses using Tukey's HSD revealed that participants in the unlikeable condition (M=5.83, SD=1.50) significantly more than those in the likeable (M=3.09, SD=1.10, p<.001), competent (M=3.47, SD=1.01, p<.001), incompetent (M=4.77, SD=1.41, p<.001), or control conditions

(*M*=3.39, *SD*=.98, *p*<.001). Participants in the incompetent condition also derogated the victim more than those in the competent (*p*<.001), likeable (*p*<.001), or control conditions (*p*<.001). All other comparisons were non-significant (*ps*≥.306).

The self-presentation condition also influenced the extent to which participants dissociated from the victim, $F_{(4,308)}$=16.25, *p*<.001, η_p^2=.17. Post-hoc analyses using Tukey's HSD indicated that participants in the unlikeable condition (*M*=5.44, *SD*=1.60) dissociated more than those in the likeable (*M*=3.52, *SD*=1.28, *p*< .001), competent (*M*=3.89, *SD*=1.28, *p*<.001), incompetent (*M*=4.44, *SD*=1.60, *p*=.001), or control conditions (*M*=3.85, *SD*=1.26, *p*<.001). Further, participants in the incompetent condition dissociated more than those in the likeable condition (*p*=.001). All other comparisons were non-significant (*ps*≥.149).

Second, a MANOVA was conducted that considered how participants responded to the manipulation check. After excluding participants who failed the manipulation check, the overall pattern of results was similar, Wilk's λ=.27, $F_{(12,518.86)}$=28.20, *p*<.001, η_p^2=.36.

A Univariate ANOVA indicated a significant difference in attributions of responsibility based on self-presentation condition, $F_{(4,198)}$=123.79, *p*<.001, η_p^2= .71. Post-hoc analyses using Tukey's HSD indicated that participants in the unlikeable condition (*M*=6.41, *SD*=1.11) attributed more responsibility than those in the likeable (*M*=2.02, *SD*=1.15, *p*<.001), competent (*M*=2.27, *SD*=.99, *p*<.001), incompetent (*M*=5.13, *SD*=1.47, *p*<.001), or control conditions (*M*=2.27, *SD*=1.14, *p*<.001). Participants in the incompetent condition also attributed more responsibility than those

in the competent (p<.001), likeable (p<.001), or control conditions (p<.001). All other comparisons were non-significant (ps≥.899).

Results also indicated a significant difference in victim derogation between conditions, $F_{(4,198)}$=49.24, p<.001, η_p^2=.50. Post-hoc analyses using Tukey's HSD revealed that participants in the unlikeable condition (M=6.02, SD=1.36) significantly more than those in the likeable (M=2.83, SD=1.24, p<.001), competent (M=3.31, SD=1.11, p<.001), incompetent (M=5.08, SD=1.55, p=.007), or control conditions (M=3.39, SD=.98, p<.001). Participants in the incompetent condition also derogated the victim more than those in the competent (p<.001), likeable (p<.001), or control conditions (p<.001). All other comparisons were non-significant (ps≥.260).

Similar to attribution of responsibility and derogation, there was also a significant difference in dissociation from the victim based on condition, $F_{(4,198)}$=17.46, p<.001, η_p^2=.26. Post-hoc analyses using Tukey's HSD indicated that participants in the unlikeable condition (M=5.59, SD=1.56) dissociated more than those in the likeable (M=3.18, SD=1.31, p< .001), competent (M=3.82, SD=1.33, p<.001), incompetent (M=4.49, SD=1.63, p=.005), or control conditions (M=3.85, SD=1.26, p<.001). Further, participants in the incompetent condition dissociated more than those in the likeable condition (p=.001). All other comparisons were non-significant (ps≥.212)

3.2.2 Exploratory Analyses[1]. Paired-samples t-tests were conducted to examine whether participants differed in the extent to which they endorsed different methods of

[1] In this study, measures of hostile and benevolent sexism were included to examine whether ambivalent sexism was related to victim-blaming. However, these measures were not included in all studies. Thus, these relationships are described in Appendix F.

victim-blaming. Collapsing across condition, results revealed that participants derogated the victim (M=4.04, SD=1.56) significantly more than they attributed responsibility (M=3.39, SD=1.98, $t_{(312)}$=-9.84, p<.001). Results also found that participants dissociated from the victim (M=4.17, SD=1.54) more than they attributed responsibility, $t_{(312)}$=-8.39, p<.001. Finally, participants engaged in marginally more dissociation than victim derogation, $t_{(312)}$=-1.84, p=.066.

As in Study 1, bivariate correlations were conducted in order to determine whether belief in free will was associated with each of the victim-blaming subscales (see Table 3). Results found that free will was not associated with attributions of responsibility (r=.09, p=.118), derogation (r=.05, p=.410), or dissociation (r=.08, p=.184). When examining the remaining three subscales on the Free Will and Determinism Scale (i.e., scientific determinism, fatalistic determinism, and unpredictability; Paulhus & Carey, 2011), results indicated a marginal negative relationship between scientific determinism and dissociation, r=-.10, p=.067. The remaining subscales were not significantly correlated to any of the victim-blaming subscales.

Table 3. *Correlations between scores on the Free Will and Determinism Scale and victim-blaming, Study 1*

Condition	Free Will	Scientific Determinism	Fatalistic Determinism	Unpredictability
Overall				
Responsibility	.09	.002	-.01	-.05
Derogation	.05	-.04	-.04	-.08
Dissociation	.08	-.05	-.03	-.07
Control				
Responsibility	.17	.10	-.21	-.33*
Derogation	.11	.26†	-.05	-.07
Dissociation	.16	.19	-.02	-.18
Likeable				
Responsibility	.02	-.12	.04	.02
Derogation	-.12	-.09	.14	-.22†
Dissociation	.07	-.29*	.03	-.13
Unlikeable				
Responsibility	.02	.05	-.07	-.02
Derogation	.15	.20	-.14	-.10
Dissociation	-.04	-.01	-.10	-.04
Competent				
Responsibility	.16	-.19†	.17	-.18
Derogation	.11	-.15	-.08	-.15
Dissociation	.06	-.16	-.17	-.15
Incompetent				
Responsibility	.11	.06	.23†	.08
Derogation	-.04	-.02	.11	.01
Dissociation	.06	-.11	.20†	.11

† $p \leq .099$
* $p < .05$

3.3 Discussion

In terms of liking, the results of Study 1 replicated those found in the pilot. Participants in the unlikeable condition indicated higher levels of victim-blaming across all three measures (attribution of responsibility, derogation, and dissociation). Further, these results held when excluding those who failed the manipulation check. As prescriptive norms are associated with liking, these findings suggest a prescriptive norm

against victim-blaming; victim-blaming is not seen as a socially desirable response to victims.

With respect to competence ratings, the patterns were similar as to those found for liking ratings. Participants in the incompetent condition attributed more responsibility and derogated the victim more than those in either the competent or the control conditions. However, there were no differences between the conditions on the dissociation measure. Contrary to expectations, this pattern of results would suggest a descriptive norm *against* victim-blaming; negatively evaluating a victim does not appear to be perceived as a particularly competent way of responding to victims or their situations. However, similar to Study 1, participants in the control condition reported moderate levels of derogation and dissociation. This tendency for participants to report moderate levels of victim-blaming suggests that victim-blaming may still be descriptively normative.

Given that a large number of participants failed to follow instructions, despite modifications to the procedure and instructions, Study 2 sought to explore the normativity of victim-blaming using an alternative procedure, the judge's paradigm. This paradigm asks participants to evaluate a third party based on his/her responses to a victim-blaming questionnaire. While the self-presentation paradigm establishes normative awareness, the judge's paradigm gives additional information regarding the social value of particular behaviors or attitudes.

4. STUDY 2

Study 2 used the judge's paradigm in order to provide further evidence of a prescriptive norm against victim-blaming and descriptive norm to engage in victim-blaming. Descriptive norms are informative; they serve to provide individuals information about effective and efficient methods of navigating the world (Burger, et al., 2010; Cialdini et al., 1990; Reno et al., 1993). Thus, people who adhere to descriptive norms should be rated higher on traits related to competence (e.g., intelligence) as compared to those who deviate from these norms.

Participants were presented with a questionnaire assessing victim-blaming that had been completed by an ostensible prior participant and were asked to evaluate the prior participant based on his/her responses. If there is a prescriptive norm to engage in victim-blaming, we would expect that participants would rate packets that reflect high victim-blaming as more competent versus those that reflect low victim-blaming. In contrast, individuals who adhere to prescriptive norms should be evaluated higher on traits related to likeability, as prescriptive norms reflect societal values. Therefore, if there is a prescriptive norm to avoid victim-blaming, participants should rate packets reflecting low victim-blaming as higher on liking versus packets reflecting high victim-blaming.

4.1 Method

4.1.1 Participants. Participants were two hundred and thirty-seven undergraduates from a large public university in the southern United States. Seventy-

seven percent were women and the average age was 18.46 years old (*SD*=.89). Fifty-nine percent of participants identified as White, 20% as Latinx, 8% as Asian or Asian-American, 5% as Black or African American, less than 1% as Native American, 7% as more than one race or ethnicity, and 1% as some other race or ethnicity.

4.1.2 Materials and Procedure. Participants were told that they would first read a short vignette about an incident that occurred recently. They were presented with the same vignette as in Studies 1 and 2 (see Appendix B). The vignette described an incident in which a young woman was sexually assaulted while attending a party with friends. Afterwards, they were given a packet that showed how an ostensible prior participant evaluated the person described in the vignette. They were instructed to evaluate this prior participant based on his or her responses to the questionnaire (see Appendix G).

4.1.2.1 Evaluation Packets. Each participant received one of three randomly chosen questionnaire packets that had been completed by an ostensible prior participant (hereafter, the "evaluation target") in an "earlier version of the study." Questionnaire packets consisted of a copy of the same vignette as read by the participant and the victim-blaming measures as used in Studies 1 and 2. Packets were completed to reflect high, moderate, or low levels of victim-blaming (See Appendix H).

4.1.2.2 Ratings of evaluation targets. In order to measure the degree to which evaluation targets were perceived as competent or likeable, I adapted measures used in research examining complementary or ambivalent stereotypes (Fiske, Cuddy, & Glick, 2007; Fiske, Xu, Cuddy, & Glick, 1999). Participants were first asked to indicate the

extent to which thirty-two traits described the evaluation target using a 7-point scale (*1=strongly disagree; 7=strongly agree*). Traits reflected either competence (e.g., ambitious, intelligent) or liking (e.g., good-natured, kind). Competence and liking composites were calculated by reverse coding as necessary and then averaging the responses to competence-relevant traits (α=.45, *M*=3.80, *SD*=.45) and liking-relevant traits (α=.70, *M*=3.93, *SD*=.66). Participants were additionally asked to indicate their overall impression of the evaluation target (*1=extremely negative; 7=extremely positive)*.

Participants then completed four items designed to measure the extent to which they were similar to or identified with the evaluation target (e.g., "I would consider hanging out with him/her," "In general, I identify with him/her."). Responses were given on a 7-point scale *(1=strongly agree; 7=strongly disagree*). A composite score was calculated by reverse scoring the items and then averaging (α=.89, *M*=3.77, *SD*=1.46). Higher scores indicated greater identification with the evaluation target.

Finally, participants indicated the extent to which they believed the incident could happen to them or a close friend (*1=strongly agree; 7=strongly disagree; M*=5.12, *SD*=1.71), whether they agreed with the evaluation target's assessment *(1=strongly agree; 7=strongly disagree*; *M*=3.99, *SD*=1.85), and were given the option to provide any other comments they had about the evaluation target (see Appendix I)

***4.1.2.3 Suspicion and manipulation check*.** In order to ensure that participants completed the questionnaire with regards to the evaluation target as opposed to the victim in the vignette, participants were asked an open-ended question asking who they were evaluating when they completed the questionnaire (see Appendix D). Participants

were additionally asked to provide any additional feedback they had about the study, to describe what they believed the study to be about, and to indicate if anything in the study seemed "odd, unclear, or incredible" in order to assess whether participants believed that the packet was completed by a prior participant.

4.2 Results

Forty-six participants (19%) reported that they completed the measures with respect to the victim as opposed to the evaluation target. An additional two participants reported suspicion that the questionnaire packets were not completed by prior participants. Analyses were conducted both with and without these participants.

4.2.1 Primary Analyses. First, a MANOVA was conducted on the full sample as an omnibus test of whether there was an overall impact of victim-blaming condition on ratings (liking and competence) of evaluation targets. Results revealed a significant effect of victim-blaming condition on ratings of evaluation targets, Wilk's λ=.86, $F_{(4,466)}$=9.39, p<.001, η_p^2=.08 (see Figure 3). Below, univariate effects are examined in order to explore the influence of condition on liking and competence separately.

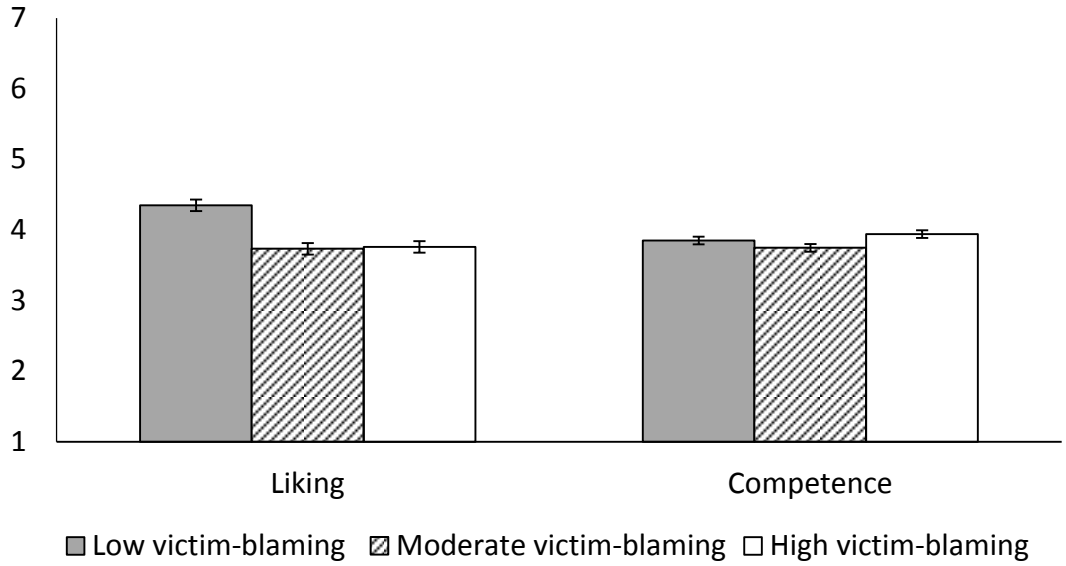

Figure 3. Study 2. Ratings of evaluation targets based on degree of victim-blaming. Error bars represent standard errors.

A Univariate ANOVA found a significant effect of condition on liking ratings, $F_{(2,234)}$=14.09, p<.001, η_p^2=.11. Post-hoc analyses using Tukey's HSD indicated that evaluation targets reflecting low victim-blaming received higher liking ratings (M=4.23, SD=.66) than either targets reflecting high (M=3.80, SD=.69, p<.001)) or moderate victim-blaming (M=3.75, SD=.51, p<.001). There was no difference in liking ratings between high and moderate levels of victim-blaming (p=.880).

There was also a significant effect of victim-blaming condition on competence ratings, $F_{(2,234)}$=4.60, p=.011, η_p^2=.04. Post-hoc analyses using Tukey's HSD revealed that high victim-blaming targets (M=3.90, SD=.54) were rated as more competent than moderate (M=3.69, SD=.37, p=.008). However, there was no difference in competence

ratings between high and low (M=3.80, SD=.41, p=.339) victim-blaming, nor was there a difference between low and moderate victim-blaming (p=.226).

Second, a MANOVA was conducted that excluded participants who reported suspicion or rated the victim instead of the evaluation target. After excluding these participants, the overall pattern of results was similar. Results revealed a significant effect of victim-blaming condition on evaluations of the target, Wilk's λ=.80, $F_{(4,370)}$=10.89, p<.001, η_p^2=.11.

Univariate results found a significant effect of condition on liking ratings, $F_{(2,186)}$=18.15, p<.001, η_p^2=.16. Post-hoc analyses using Tukey's HSD found that targets reflecting low victim-blaming (M=4.35, SD=.65) than either high (M=3.76, SD=.54, p<.001) or moderate victim-blaming (M=3.73, SD=.54, p<.001). There was no difference in liking ratings between high and moderate victim-blaming targets (p=.971).

There was also a significant effect of victim-blaming condition on competence ratings, $F_{(2,186)}$=3.27, p=.040, η_p^2=.03. Post-hoc analyses using Tukey's HSD revealed that high victim-blaming targets (M=3.94, SD=.54) were rated as more competent than moderate (M=3.74, SD=.34, p=.030). However, there was no difference in competence ratings between high and low victim-blaming (M=3.85, SD=.38, p=.465), nor was there a difference between low and moderate victim-blaming (p=.365).

4.2.2 Exploratory Analyses. A univariate analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted in order to examine whether participants were more likely to agree with low, moderate, or high victim-blaming targets. Results found a significant effect of victim-blaming condition on the degree to which participants agreed with the target's

assessment, $F_{(2,232)}$=5.14, p=.007, η_p^2=.042. Post-hoc analyses using Tukey's HSD indicated that participants were significantly more likely to agree with targets expressing low victim-blaming (M=4.53, SD=1.73) as compared to either moderate (M=3.79, SD=1.68, p=.033) or high victim-blaming targets (M=3.67, SD=2.03, p=.009). There was no difference in agreement between the high and moderate victim-blaming conditions (p=.903).

4.3 Discussion

Prior research suggests that prescriptive norms, what we *should* do, are value laden (Gangloff et al., 2014; Gilibert & Cambon, 2003; Jellison & Green, 1981). Individuals who adhere to these norms are perceived as warm or likeable. In contrast, descriptive norms, what people *actually* do, serve to provide information regarding efficient or effective ways to behave. Individuals who adhere to descriptive norms are therefore perceived as competent – they are perceived as effectively managing the world around them. Thus, it was hypothesized that participants would rate evaluation targets low in victim-blaming as more likeable than those who were more moderate or high in victim-blaming. Further, I expected that participants would rate evaluation targets high in victim-blaming as more competent as compared to those who were moderate or low in victim-blaming.

The hypotheses were partially supported. Evaluation targets whose answers reflected low victim-blaming were perceived as more likeable overall than those whose answers reflected moderate or high levels of victim-blaming. This pattern of results

suggests that there is a prescriptive norm to avoid victim-blaming; participants generally did not perceive that engaging as victim-blaming as a desirable behavior.

The results concerning competence ratings were less conclusive. If participants perceived victim-blaming as effective, they should have evaluated high victim-blaming evaluation targets as more competent. Although evaluation targets reflecting high victim-blaming were evaluated as significantly more competent than those who were moderate, there was no difference in competence ratings between high and low victim-blaming. Rather than addressing whether engaging victim-blaming is a descriptive norm, participants may have been responding to whether a respondent "picked a side." That is, as the responses in the moderate condition hovered around the midpoint of the scale for each item. Participants may have perceived high and low victim-blaming as more competent as their answers indicated a stronger opinion. For example, one participant reported, *"That the respondent never really selected "agree" or "disagree", just "somewhat". There was no concrete thoughts [sic]."* In brief, Study 2 seemed to provide additional evidence of a prescriptive norm to avoid victim-blaming, but provided little support that there may be a descriptive norm to engage in victim-blaming behavior.

Exploratory results concerning participants' agreement with the target may suggest a descriptive norm *against* victim-blaming. Participants were more likely to agree with targets who reflected low victim-blaming, rather than moderate or high victim-blaming. However, while this tendency might reflect descriptive norms, it could

also be interpreted as reflecting social desirability concerns (i.e., it is not seen as desirable to blame a victim).

5. STUDY 3

While Study 2 found evidence of a prescriptive norm to avoid victim-blaming, it failed to find evidence of a descriptive norm to engage in victim-blaming. However, it should be noted that when using the judge's paradigm, researchers frequently provide a summary of the ostensible respondents' answers in order to assist participants in interpreting the responses. Study 3 attempted to rectify this limitation by including a brief written statement by the ostensible prior participant that describes and explains their evaluation of the victim. It was expected that evaluation targets whose responses reflect reliance on personal responsibility (and thus, are high in victim-blaming) would be evaluated as more competent than those reflecting low victim-blaming. As in Study 2, it was expected that responses indicating low victim-blaming would be evaluated as more likeable. Further, Study 3 also explored whether the gender of the target might moderate ratings of likeability and competence.

5.1 Method

5.1.1 Participants. Participants were two hundred and four undergraduates from a large public university in the southern United States. Sixty-four percent were women and the average age was 18.74 years old (*SD*=.88). Sixty-eight percent of participants identified as White, 14% as Latinx, 6% as Black or African-American, 5% as Asian or Asian-American, and 7% indicated more than one race or ethnicity.

5.1.2 Materials and Procedure. Participants were informed that they were participating in a study about decision making and person evaluation and completed the

measures described below. The procedure for Study 3 was similar to Study 2, participants read a brief vignette describing an incident in which a young woman was sexually assaulted while attending a party (see Appendix B), read the responses to the vignette from an ostensible prior participant (evaluation target), and then were asked to evaluate the target in terms of competence and likeability. Participants were additionally given the option to provide any other comments regarding either the target or the victim (see Appendix I).

5.1.2.1 Manipulation of victim-blaming. Participants were randomly assigned to one of two conditions: high victim-blaming or low victim-blaming. In the high victim-blaming condition, participants read the same vignette as in the previous studies. As in Study 2, participants then received a questionnaire packet that had been completed by an ostensible prior participant (the "evaluation target") in either a way to indicate high or low victim-blaming. At the end of this packet, the participant read additional comments provided by the evaluation target that briefly summarized his/her opinion and evaluating of the victim (see Appendix H; Appendix J).

In order to create comments that not only reflect high (or low) victim-blaming, but also seem believable, I examined feedback and comments from participants in the earlier studies. Comments that indicated high victim-blaming tended to state that *"it wasn't her fault, but…"* For example, one participant responded, *"It was her personal decision to go up to a bedroom with the man she was talking to, and she is the one who placed herself in a bad position. By going up to a bedroom with this person she has only known for a few hours to "continue talking" she probably gave the guy the wrong idea."*

Another reported, *"She was to quick to trust the young man . . . my question is why would she go upstairs to a room ALONE with someone she barley knew? I mean did she really think he just wanted to just talk? why couldn't She continue her conversation with him downstairs? Next time she needs to think about what she is doing before she does it. Plus, she should have never put yourself in that situation in the first place. [sic]"*

Participants seemed to stress that they were not blaming the victim, but that they believed that she failed to adequately protect herself, that she made poor decisions, or that she was naïve. Thus, comments were created by modifying some of these participant comments from Study 2 in order to stress this idea of personal responsibility. The final comment read:

> *The girl voluntarily went into the bedroom with this suspect. How is she not in some sort of way to blame? Yes, she did not know this was going to happen, but she made the decision to go upstairs. I believe that she put herself into a situation that never has good outcomes. I don't think that anyone deserves something like that, but she did kind of ask for it.*

Low victim-blaming comments focused on themes of consent and holding men, rather than women, responsible for sexual assault. For example, *"We are, in reality, trying to make women responsible for the event and teaching them how to avoid them rather than teaching others not to commit these actions [sic]."* Another participant commented, *"Just because the girl went upstairs so they could talk did NOT give that man permission to have sex with her."* As with the high victim-blaming condition, the

target's comments were crafted by modifying responses of prior participants. The final comment read:

> *The girl voluntarily went into the bedroom with this suspect. But, she is not in any way to blame. She did not know this was going to happen, even though she made the decision to go upstairs. I believe that he put her into a situation that never has good outcomes. I don't think that anyone deserves something like that. She bears no responsibility for the incident.*

5.1.2.2 Manipulation of gender. In order to manipulate the ostensible gender of the evaluation target, a demographics questionnaire was included at the end of the completed victim-blaming packets (see Appendix K). Packets either identified the evaluation target as male or female. The remaining demographic characteristics (i.e., age, race/ethnicity, and year in school) were held constant.

5.1.2.3 Ratings of evaluation targets. Participants evaluated targets in the same way as in Study 3 (see Appendix I). Participants indicated the extent to which thirty-two traits reflecting either competence (e.g., ambitious, intelligent) or liking (e.g., good-natured, kind) describe the evaluation target using a 7-point scale (*1=strongly disagree; 7=strongly agree;* Fiske et al., 2007; Fiske et al., 1999). Composite competence and likeability scores were calculated by reverse-coding as necessary and then averaging the responses. After rating targets on each trait, participants were asked to indicate their overall impression of the target (*1=extremely negative; 7=extremely positive*), the extent to which they believed that a similar incident could happen to them or a close friend (*1=strongly disagree; 7=strongly agree*), and the degree to which they agreed with the

target's evaluation (*1=strongly disagree; 7=strongly agree).* Finally, participants were given the option to provide any other comments they have regarding either the target or the victim.

5.1.2.4 Suspicion and manipulation check. In order to ensure that participants completed the dependent measures with respect to the evaluation target as opposed to the victim, participants were asked an open-ended question asking who their evaluation applies to (see Appendix D). In order to probe for suspicion, participants were then additionally asked to provide any additional feedback they have about the study, to describe what they believed the study to be about, and to indicate if anything in the study seemed "odd, unclear, or incredible."

5.2 Results

Twenty-three participants (11%) reported that they evaluated the victim as opposed to the ostensible prior participant. An additional four reported suspicion that the questionnaire packets were not completed by prior participants. Analyses were conducted both with and without these participants.

5.2.1 Primary Analyses. First, a MANOVA was conducted on the full sample as an omnibus test of whether there was an overall impact of victim-blaming condition or the gender of the evaluation target on ratings (liking and competence) of evaluation targets (see Figure 4). Results revealed a significant main effect of victim-blaming condition, Wilk's λ=.58, $F_{(2,199)}$=72.72, p<.001, η_p^2=.42. The main effect of gender (Wilk's λ=.99, $F_{(2,199)}$=.74, p=.477, η_p^2=.01) and the interaction between victim-blaming and gender (Wilk's λ=.98, $F_{(2,199)}$=2.23, p=.111, η_p^2=.02) were both non-significant.

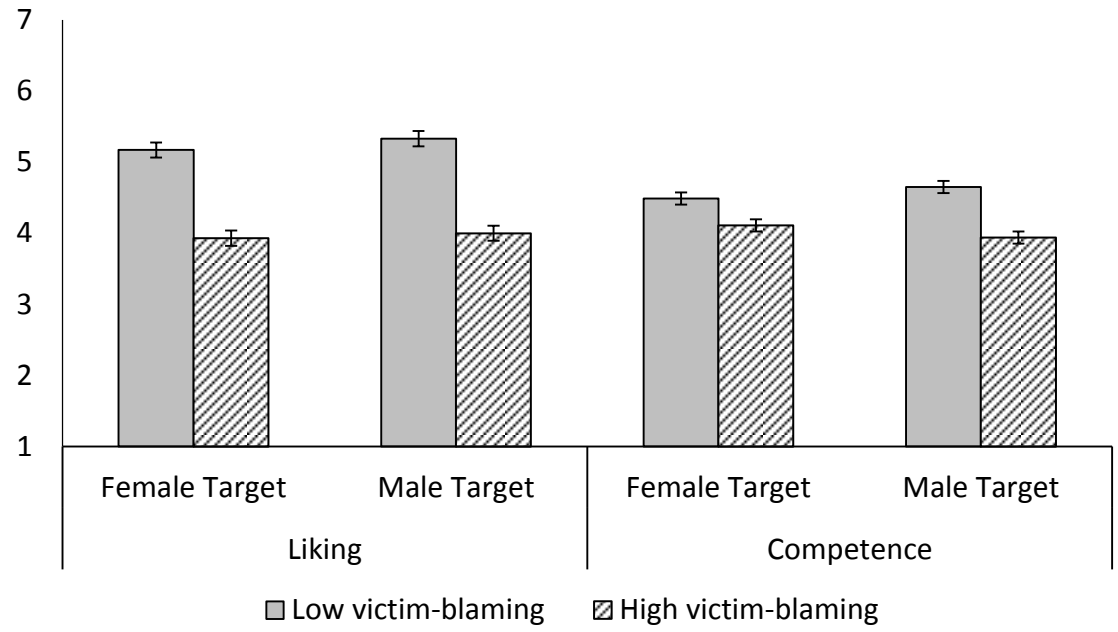

Figure 4. Study 3. Ratings of evaluation targets based on degree of victim-blaming and target gender. Error bars represent standard errors.

Next, the univariate analyses for both liking and competence were examined. A Univariate ANOVA revealed a significant main effect of victim-blaming condition on liking ratings, $F_{(1,200)}$=145.47, p<.001, η_p^2=.421. Evaluation targets reflecting low victim-blaming were rated as more likeable (M=5.25, SD=.56) as compared to those reflecting high victim-blaming (M=3.97, SD=.92). There was not a significant main effect of target gender on likeability, $F_{(1,200)}$=1.11, p=.294, η_p^2=.01, nor was there a significant interaction between gender and victim-blaming, $F_{(1,200)}$=.18, p=.669, η_p^2<.01.

There was also a significant effect of victim-blaming condition on competence ratings, $F_{(1,200)}$=41.50, p<.001, η_p^2=.17. Evaluation targets reflecting low victim-blaming (M=4.57, SD=.60) were evaluated as more competent than those indicating high victim-blaming (M=4.02, SD=.62). Target gender did not significantly influence competence

ratings, $F_{(1,200)}$=.002, p=.963, η_p^2<.001. However, there was a significant interaction between target gender and victim-blaming condition, $F_{(1,200)}$=4.11, p=.044, η_p^2=.02. Tests of simple effects indicated that women who were low in victim-blaming (M=4.49, SD=.68) were rated as significantly more competent than those high in victim-blaming (M=4.11, SD=.68; $F_{(1,200)}$=9.75, p=.002, η_p^2=.05). Similarly, men low in victim-blaming (M=4.65, SD=.50) were rated as significantly more competent than those high in victim-blaming (M=3.94, SD=.54; $F_{(1,200)}$=35.86, p<.001, η_p^2=.15). While the pattern of results was similar for female and male evaluation targets, an examination of the effect sizes indicated that the influence of victim-blaming on competence ratings had a greater effect for male versus female evaluation targets. Tests of simple effects also revealed that in the low victim-blaming condition, there was not a significant effect of gender on competence ratings, $F_{(1,200)}$=1.96, p=.163, η_p^2=.01. In the high victim-blaming condition, there was again was no significant effect of gender on competence ratings, $F_{(1,200)}$=2.15, p=.144, η_p^2=.01.

Second, a MANOVA was conducted that considered how participants responded to the manipulation check and whether they expressed suspicion. After excluding these participants from analysis, the overall pattern of results was similar. Results revealed a significant main effect of victim-blaming condition on ratings of evaluation targets, Wilk's λ=.54, $F_{(2,172)}$=72.38, p<.001, η_p^2=.46. The main effect of target gender (Wilk's λ=.98, $F_{(2,172)}$=1.43, p=.241, η_p^2=.02 and the interaction between victim-blaming and gender (Wilk's λ=.98, $F_{(2,172)}$=1.66, p=.192, η_p^2=.02) were both non-significant.

A Univariate ANOVA indicated that there was a significant main effect of victim-blaming condition on liking ratings, $F_{(1,173)}$=143.54, p<.001, η_p^2=.45. Low victim-blaming targets (M=5.28, SD=.48) were evaluated as more likeable than high victim-blaming targets (M=3.96, SD=.93). There was a marginal effect of target gender on liking ratings, $F_{(1,173)}$=2.86, p=.093, η_p^2=.02. Male targets (M=4.72, SD=.96) were evaluated marginally more likable than female targets (M=4.55, SD=1.01). The interaction between victim-blaming and target gender was non-significant, $F_{(1,173)}$=.27, p=.606, η_p^2=.61.

There was also a significant main effect of victim-blaming condition on competence ratings, $F_{(1,173)}$=42.15, p<.001, η_p^2=.20. The main effect of target gender was non-significant, $F_{(1,173)}$=.34, p=.562, η_p^2<.01. The interaction between victim-blaming and target gender was marginal, $F_{(1,173)}$=3.26, p=.073, η_p^2=.02. Although the interaction did not reach traditional significance, as it had when all participants were included, tests of simple effects were conducted in order to examine the pattern of results. Women who were low in victim-blaming (M=4.47, SD=.70) were rated as significantly more competent than those high in victim-blaming (M=4.04, SD=.72; $F_{(1,173)}$=10.47, p=.001, η_p^2=.06). Similarly, men low in victim-blaming (M=4.69, SD=.46) were rated as significantly more competent than those high in victim-blaming (M=3.92, SD=.53; $F_{(1,173)}$=35.97, p<.001, η_p^2=.17). While the pattern of results was similar for female and male evaluation targets, an examination of the effect sizes indicated that the influence of victim-blaming on competence ratings had a greater effect for male versus female evaluation targets. In contrast with when all participants were

included in analyses, tests of simple effects also revealed that in the low victim-blaming condition, there was a marginal effect of gender on competence ratings, $F_{(1,173)}$=3.47, p=.064, η_p^2=.02. Men (M=4.69, SD=.46) were rated as marginally more competent as compared to women (M=4.47, SD=.70). In the high victim-blaming condition, there was again was no significant effect of gender on competence ratings, $F_{(1,200)}$=1.15, p=.286, η_p^2=.01.

5.2.2 Exploratory Analyses[2]. An independent samples t-test was conducted in order to examine whether participants were more likely to agree with low or high victim-blaming targets. Results found a significant effect of victim-blaming condition on the degree to which participants agreed with the target's assessment, t(201)=10.98, p<.001, d=1.54. Participants agreed more with targets reflecting low victim-blaming (M=5.22, SD=1.70) versus those reflecting high victim-blaming (M=2.46, SD=1.87).

5.3 Discussion

The results of Study 3 partially replicated those of Study 2. Low victim-blaming targets were evaluated as more likeable, providing further evidence of a prescriptive norm against engaging in victim-blaming. While Study 2 found no difference in competence ratings between high and low victim-blamers, Study 3 found that low victim-blaming targets were also perceived as more competent than high victim-blamers. As descriptive norms are associated with competence, this might suggest a descriptive norm against victim-blaming.

[2] In this study, measures of hostile and benevolent sexism were included to examine whether results were moderated by these individual differences. Due to programming error, these measures were not collected for all participants. Thus, these relationships are described in Appendix L.

Study 3 also explored whether the gender of a target in combination with the level of victim-blaming might influence others' evaluations. While the target's gender did not influence liking evaluations, it did influence perceptions of competence. Low levels of victim-blaming were associated with greater competence; however, this relationship was stronger for men versus women. While both men and women can experience sexual assault, women are disproportionately affected (Breiding et al., 2014). As the prevalence is much higher for women, issues related to sexual assault may be perceived as primarily a "women's issue." Thus, women may be expected to respond more empathetically to survivors and may not receive the same 'boost' in competence ratings that men might receive for avoiding victim-blaming.

Studies 2 and 3 attempted to evaluate whether high or low victim-blaming were perceived as competent. However, participants were asked to evaluate competence for an individual more generally. Study 4 used a different paradigm that asked participants to evaluate a third party's responses to a victim-blaming questionnaire when competence was more relevant. Specifically, we asked participants to evaluate potential candidates for a leadership position within a student organization.

6. STUDY 4

Study 4 aimed to find evidence of a descriptive norm of victim-blaming through the legislative paradigm. The legislative paradigm is similar to the judge's paradigm in that it asks participants to evaluate an ostensible prior participant based on his/her responses to a questionnaire. However, it differs in that instead of rating the respondent in terms of warmth and competence, participants were asked to determine whether the respondent is a suitable candidate for a job, position in government, or other leadership position. To be successful in these types of positions, candidates should be highly competent and be willing and able to make appropriate and effective decisions. Thus, participants should be more likely to select and approve of candidates they perceive as highly competent. If there is a descriptive norm to engage in victim-blaming, participants should show greater support for candidates reflecting high versus low victim-blaming.

6.1 Method

6.1.1 Participants. Participants were 175 undergraduates from a large public university in the southern United States. Sixty-nine percent were women and the average age was 19.14 years old (*SD*=1.00). Fifty-four percent of participants identified as White, 26% as Latinx, 7% as Asian or Asian-American, 3% as Black or African American, 9% indicated more than one race or ethnicity, and 1% declined to report.

6.1.2 Materials and Procedure. Participants were informed that they would be participating in a study investigating how individuals are selected for leadership

positions. Participants first received a description of an open student government position, including primary duties, and skills and qualifications that an ideal candidate would possess. Participants then received the application materials from an ostensible potential candidate including a resume and results of a "decision-making" survey designed to assess how individuals think about and evaluate difficult situations. After reading over these materials, participants evaluated the candidate in terms of how suitable, qualified, and successful the candidate is likely to be.

6.1.2.1 Application packets. Participants were instructed that they would be taking part in a study investigating how individuals for leadership positions are chosen. They received a copy of an application packet of an individual seeking the position of Chief Justice of the Texas A&M University's Judicial Court (see Appendix M).

The first page of the application packet described the position of Chief Justice, as well as the role of the Judiciary Court. Participants then saw the resume of one of the potential nominees describing his/her qualifications and educational experience. Finally, participants saw a completed 'decision-making' questionnaire that the ostensible nominees have completed. Participants were told that potential nominees have been asked to complete these questionnaires as a method of allowing members of the Student Senate to evaluate how nominees go about thinking about and evaluating difficult and ambiguous scenarios. These packets were made up of two scenarios: the Heinz Dilemma (distractor task) and a victim-blaming scenario (target task). The Heinz Dilemma (Kohlberg, 1958) describes an incident in which a young man steals a drug in

order to save his wife from cancer. The second scenario consisted of the same vignette and questionnaire as used in the previous studies.

6.1.2.2 Manipulation of victim-blaming. Victim-blaming was manipulated in the same way as in Studies 3 and 4 (see Appendix H). As part of the potential nominee's application packet, participants received a completed victim-blaming questionnaire that indicated either high or low victim-blaming.

6.1.2.3 Manipulation of candidate quality. In order to determine whether the candidate's perceived quality moderated participant evaluations, two versions of the candidate's resume were created. One reflected relatively high quality (e.g., high grade point average, relevant experience), while the other reflected a lower quality (e.g., moderate grade point average, no relevant experience).

6.1.2.4 Evaluation of potential nominees. After reviewing the application packet, participants evaluated the competence of the nominee by responding to eight questions regarding his/her suitability for the position of Chief Justice of the Texas A&M Judiciary Court (see Appendix N). Example items include: "How suitable do you think this potential nominee would be for the position of Chief Justice?", "How successful do you think this potential nominee would be if he/she were elected to the position of Chief Justice?", and "Would you support the nomination of this person to the position of Chief Justice?" Responses were given on a 7-point scale, where higher scores indicate more perceived competence. A composite score was created by averaging the responses to all eight items (α=.96, M=4.89, SD=1.44).

Participants also completed the same measures of liking (α=.94, M=4.79, SD=.96) and competence (α=.87, M=5.12, SD=.69) as in the previous studies. Finally, participants were asked to provide any additional comments they would like to make in an open-response format.

6.2 Results

Fifteen participants (9%) indicated that they did not follow the instructions and an additional three reported suspicion that the applications were not from an actual applicant. Results are reported both with and without these participants.

First, a two-way MANOVA was conducted on the full sample as an omnibus test of whether there was an overall effect of victim-blaming and candidate quality on evaluations of suitability, competence, and likeability. Results revealed a significant main effect of victim-blaming, Wilk's λ=.67, $F_{(3,169)}$=27.57, p<.001, η_p^2=.33 (see Figure 5). There was also a significant main effect of candidate quality, Wilk's λ=.67, $F_{(3,169)}$=28.19, p<.001, η_p^2=.33 (see Figure 5). The interaction between victim-blaming and candidate quality was non-significant, Wilk's λ=.98, $F_{(3,169)}$=1.06, p=.366, η_p^2=.02.

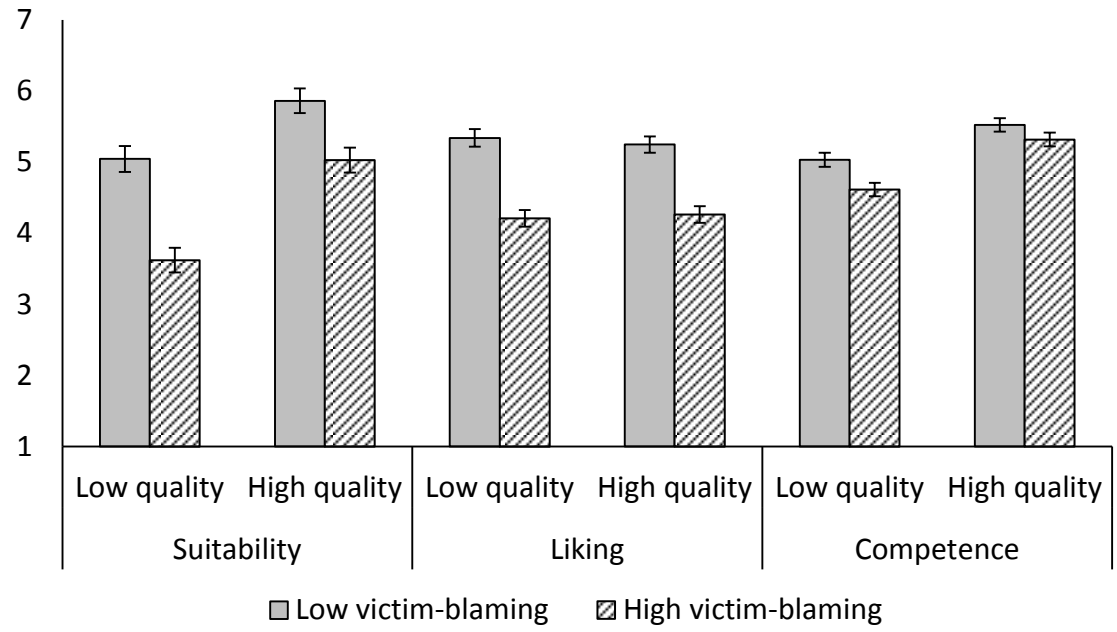

Figure 5. Study 4. Evaluations of candidates based on degree of victim-blaming and quality. Error bars represent standard errors.

A Univariate ANOVA indicated a significant main effect of victim-blaming on ratings of suitability, $F_{(1,171)}=40.83$, $p<.001$, $\eta_p^2=.19$. The low victim-blaming candidate ($M=5.47$, $SD=.94$) was evaluated as more suitable than the high victim-blaming candidate ($M=4.32$, $SD=1.56$). The main effect of candidate quality was also significant, $F_{(1,171)}=39.76$, $p<.001$, $\eta_p^2=.19$. The high-quality candidate ($M=5.45$, $SD=1.26$) was evaluated as more suitable than the low-quality candidate ($M=4.30$, $SD=1.33$). The interaction between victim-blaming and candidate quality was marginal, $F_{(1,171)}=2.81$, $p=.096$, $\eta_p^2=.02$.

Although the interaction did not reach traditional significance, tests of simple effects were conducted to determine the pattern of results. Tests of simple effects indicated that in the low-quality condition, the low victim-blaming candidate ($M=5.04$,

SD=.96) was rated as significantly more suitable than the high victim-blaming candidate (*M*=3.62, *SD*=1.27; $F_{(1,171)}$=34.39, *p*<.01, η_p^2=.17. A similar effect was found in the high-quality condition. The low victim-blaming candidate (*M*=5.86, *SD*=.75) was evaluated as significantly more suitable than the high victim-blaming candidate (*M*=5.03, *SD*=1.53 $F_{(1,171)}$=11.66, *p*=.001, η_p^2=.06.

Results also revealed that in the low victim-blaming condition, the high-quality candidate (*M*=5.86, *SD*=.75) was evaluated as significantly more suitable than the low-quality candidate (*M*=5.04, *SD*=.96; $F_{(1,171)}$=11.97, *p*=.001, η_p^2=.07. Similarly, in the high victim-blaming condition, the high-quality candidate (*M*=5.03, *SD*=1.53) was rated as significantly more competent than the low-quality candidate (*M*=3.62, *SD*=1.27; $F_{(1,171)}$=33.01, *p*<.001, η_p^2=.16).

There was also a significant main effect of victim-blaming on liking ratings, $F_{(1,171)}$=80.06, *p*<.001, η_p^2=.32. The low victim-blaming candidate (*M*=5.29, *SD*=.71) was rated as more likeable than the high victim-blaming candidate (*M*=4.24, *SD*=.84). Neither the main effect of candidate quality ($F_{(1,171)}$=.03, *p*=.869, η_p^2<.01), nor the interaction were significant ($F_{(1,171)}$=.39, *p*=.532, η_p^2<.01).

Similar to the results for suitability and liking, a univariate ANOVA revealed a significant main effect on competence ratings, $F_{(1,171)}$=10.44, *p*=.001, η_p^2=.06. The low victim-blaming candidate (*M*=5.29, *SD*=.63) was rated as more competent than the high low victim-blaming candidate (*M*=4.96, *SD*=.77). There was also a significant main effect of candidate quality, $F_{(1,171)}$=38.45, *p*<.001, η_p^2=.18. The high-quality candidate (*M*=5.42, *SD*=.59) was rated as significantly more competent than the low-quality

candidate (M=4.81, SD=.72). The interaction between victim-blaming and candidate quality was not significant, $F_{(1,171)}$=1.21, p=.272, η_p^2=.01.

Next, a two-way MANOVA was conducted that took participants' responses to the manipulation check into consideration. After excluding participants who did not follow instructions or who reported suspicion, the pattern of results was similar. Results revealed a significant main effect of victim-blaming (Wilk's λ=.63, $F_{(1,151)}$=29.22, p<.001, η_p^2=.37) and of candidate quality (Wilk's λ=.71, $F_{(1,151)}$=20.82, p<.001, η_p^2=.29). The two-way interaction was not significant, Wilk's λ=.99, $F_{(1,151)}$=.54, p=.654, η_p^2=.01.

A Univariate ANOVA indicated a significant main effect of victim-blaming on ratings of suitability, $F_{(1,153)}$=39.31, p<.001, η_p^2=.20. The low victim-blaming candidate (M=5.51, SD=.94) was evaluated as more suitable than the high victim-blaming candidate (M=4.28, SD=1.58). The main effect of candidate quality was also significant, $F_{(1,153)}$=29.03, p<.001, η_p^2=.16. The high-quality candidate (M=5.43, SD=1.31) was evaluated as more suitable than the low-quality candidate (M=4.36, SD=1.36). In contrast to when all participants were included in analyses, the interaction between victim-blaming and candidate quality was non-significant, $F_{(1,153)}$=1.35, p=.247, η_p^2=.01.

There was also a significant main effect of victim-blaming on liking ratings, $F_{(1,153)}$=80.90, p<.001, η_p^2=.35. The low victim-blaming candidate (M=5.36, SD=.67) was rated as more likeable than the high victim-blaming candidate (M=4.23, SD=.88). Neither the main effect of candidate quality ($F_{(1,153)}$<.01, p=.967, η_p^2<.01), nor the interaction were significant ($F_{(1,153)}$=.18, p=.671, η_p^2<.01).

There was also a significant main effect of victim-blaming on competence ratings, $F_{(1,153)}$=8.02, p=.005, η_p^2=.05. The low victim-blaming candidate (M=5.27, SD=.61) was rated as more competent than the high low victim-blaming candidate (M=4.97, SD=.73). The main effect of candidate quality was also significant, $F_{(1,153)}$=23.30, p<.001, η_p^2=.13. The high-quality candidate (M=5.37, SD=.58) was rated as significantly more competent than the low-quality candidate (M=4.87, SD=.70). The interaction between victim-blaming and candidate quality was not significant, $F_{(1,153)}$=.60, p=.442, η_p^2<.01.

6.3 Discussion

Study 4 used an alternate paradigm to evaluate the perceived competence of victim-blaming behavior. Participants were asked to evaluate a potential candidate for the position of Chief Justice for their university's judicial court. It would be expected that in order for an individual to be successful in leadership positions such as these, they should be highly competent. As descriptive norms are associated with competence, participant evaluations of a candidate expressing either high or low victim-blaming should provide information regarding descriptive norms regarding victim-blaming.

Results suggested a descriptive norm against victim-blaming. Participants evaluated a low victim-blaming candidate as more suitable as compared to a high victim-blaming candidate. Interestingly, while this pattern was found for both high and low-quality candidates, the degree to which the candidate engaged in victim-blaming behavior had a stronger effect in the low-quality condition. Thus, the degree to which individual's seeking leadership positions endorse victim-blaming behavior and/or

attitudes may influence support for their candidacy. However, people may primarily rely on other information (e.g., experience) to determine an individual's competency or suitability for the position.

Evaluations of candidate competence also suggested a descriptive norm against victim-blaming. Participants evaluated the low victim-blaming candidate as significantly more competent than the high victim-blaming candidate. Finally, Study 4 provided additional evidence of a prescriptive norm against victim-blaming, consistent with Studies 2 and 3. Low victim-blaming was perceived as more likeable than high victim-blaming.

With respect to candidate quality, results were as expected. Participants rated the high-quality candidate as more suitable and competent as compared to the low-quality candidate. Candidate quality did not have an effect on liking ratings; high quality candidates were not merely rated more positively overall. This suggests that candidates' likeability is distinct from their perceived ability to be successful in a particular position. That is, being highly qualified does not imply that an individual will also be perceived as likeable.

7. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This research used three paradigms to investigate whether there is a normative component to victim-blaming and to explore whether prescriptive (what we should do) and descriptive (what we actually do) norms were congruent. In the first paradigm, participants were asked to complete a victim-blaming questionnaire in such a way as to present a positive impression (i.e., likeable or competent), negative impression (i.e., unlikeable or incompetent), or were given no instructions on how to respond. In the second paradigm, participants were asked to evaluate a third party based on his/her responses to a victim-blaming questionnaire. In the third, final paradigm, participants were asked to not only evaluate a third party based on his responses, but to also indicate whether he would be a suitable candidate for a leadership position. The primary hypotheses were generated based on prior research suggesting that prescriptive and descriptive norms are related to likeability and effective behavior, respectively (Alves & Correia, 2008; Cialdini et al., 1990; Dubois & Beauvois, 2005; Gilibert & Cambon, 2003). Thus, conditions which asked participants to respond in a (un)likeable way (Pilot Study, Study 1) and evaluations of likeability (Studies 2, 3, and 4) were expected to provide information regarding prescriptive norms surrounding victim-blaming. In contrast, conditions which asked participants to present as (in)competent (Study 1) and evaluations of competence (Studies 2, 3, and 4) and suitability for a leadership position (Study 4) were expected to provide information regarding descriptive norms. Overall, results of these studies suggest that victim-blaming is counter to broad, social values

(indicating a prescriptive norm *against* victim-blaming) and that individuals who engage in victim-blaming are not perceived as demonstrating a useful interpretation of the event (indicating a descriptive norm *against* victim-blaming).

With respect to prescriptive norms, low levels of victim-blaming were associated with greater liking across all five studies. The Pilot and Study 1 found that when participants were asked to present themselves as likeable, they reported lower levels of victim-blaming than when asked to present themselves as unlikeable. Further, participants in the likeable condition also reported lower victim-blaming than in a control condition in which they received no instruction on how to respond. These findings not only suggest that victim-blaming is prescriptively counter-normative, but that participants were aware of this norm and able to use this information to manage their impression on others. Studies 2 and 3 found that participants also rated a third party as more likeable when he/she completed a victim-blaming questionnaire in such a way that reflected low, rather than high (or moderate; Study 2), victim-blaming. Finally, Study 4 found that a student applying for a leadership position for a student organization (i.e., university judicial court) was evaluated as more likeable when he indicated low (versus high) levels of victim-blaming on questionnaire. Together, these results suggest that victim-blaming is perceived as socially undesirable and prescriptively counter-normative.

With the exception of Study 2, which found that victim-blaming did not influence competence ratings, the overall pattern of results across studies suggested a descriptive norm against victim-blaming. Study 1 found that when participants were

asked to present themselves as incompetent, they attributed more responsibility and derogated a sexual assault victim more than when presenting themselves as competent. This finding was conceptually replicated in Study 3; participants evaluated an individual reporting low (versus high) victim-blaming as more competent. Study 4 found that when evaluating an individual for a leadership position, a low victim-blaming candidate was rated as both more suitable and more competent than a high victim-blaming candidate. Moreover, these findings are bolstered by the findings in Studies 2 and 3 that participants reported greater agreement with an ostensible prior participant who indicated low levels of victim-blaming.

These findings related to descriptive norms in victim blaming were contrary to expectations inferred from the literature. It was expected that due to victim-blaming's link with factors that have been previously shown to be normative within Western culture (e.g., internal locus of control, belief in a just world, self-sufficiency; Alves & Correia, 2008; Dubois & Beauvois, 2005; Jellison & Green, 1981; Stern & Manifold, 1977), focusing on a victim's personal responsibility would be seen as a useful or effective interpretation of the event. Had this hypothesis been supported, it would have suggested a descriptive norm to engage in victim-blaming.

Exploratory analyses in the Pilot and Study 1 also investigated whether belief in free will predicted the degree to which participants endorsed victim-blaming. The concept of free will incorporates some aspects of personal responsibility. Individuals who endorse free will tend to believe that we have control over the decisions that we make: events do not happen by chance (Monroe, Brady, & Malle, 2016). Similarly, a

focus on personal responsibility stresses the role that people play in determining their own outcomes. Therefore, I used the FAD+ (Paulhus & Carey, 2011) as a proxy for belief in personal responsibility. As I posited that a norm to engage in victim-blaming might stem from a focus on personal responsibility, it was expected that belief in free will would be associated with higher levels of victim-blaming, particularly within the control conditions. While the relationship between belief in free will and victim-blaming is an area yet to be fully explored, there is some prior research which might suggest a positive association between the two (Clark et al., 2014, Ogletree, 2014; Savani, Stephens, & Markus, 2011). For example, Savani et al. (2011) found that after making the concept of choice salient, participants engaged in more than victim-blaming than a control condition. Contrary to expectations, in both the Pilot and Study 1, belief in free will was not associated with victim-blaming and this finding was similar whether examining participant responses as a whole or within each condition.

Interestingly, when participants were asked to complete a victim-blaming questionnaire with no further instruction (i.e., control conditions in the Pilot and Study 1), they reported significantly more derogation and dissociation as compared to attribution of responsibility. A similar pattern was found for the positive self-presentation conditions (i.e., likeable and competent conditions); participants indicated significantly more derogation and dissociation than attribution of responsibility. This pattern suggests that outright blaming is perceived as particularly undesirable and that participants are engaging in alternative and perhaps more subtle forms of victim-blaming. Moreover, this hesitancy to engage in explicit blaming speaks to social

desirability issues revolving around victim evaluations. The results of these studies suggest that victim-blaming is generally seen as undesirable, participants may be reluctant to respond in ways that might suggest that they, themselves, are condoning negative evaluations of victims. If this is so, it would provide additional evidence for a prescriptive norm against victim-blaming. However, it may also indicate that participants may be exaggerating their responses in such a way to distance themselves from blaming behavior. While this may be less of a concern for the experimental conditions within the self-presentation paradigm, this could present a problem for the control condition (self-presentation paradigm) or when making evaluations regarding the victim-blaming responses of a third party.

7.1 Limitations and Future Directions

While these studies provide valuable insight into how people may be thinking about both victims and as well as those who engaging in victim-blaming, there are methodological issues that should be considered. The paradigms used in these studies may not have been an appropriate method for capturing descriptive norms. While descriptive norms are informational in that we may refer to them to determine the most effective course of action, they are fundamentally about perceptions of the frequency of a particular behavior. People may subsequently interpret a particular behavior or attitude as effective or competent *because* it is a common response to a specific situation. Asking participants to present as (in)competent or to evaluate the competence of another individual based on his/her responses may not necessarily reflect perceptions of frequency, but rather be an alternative method of ascertaining the social value of a

particular behavior or attitude. Dubois and Beauvois (2005) suggest that a behavior, attitude, or trait's social value can be determined by two independent dimensions: social desirability and social utility. From this perspective, the current results regarding competence may better reflect prescriptive rather than descriptive norms, albeit using an alternative measure. Future research could adapt the current paradigms to better address the presence of descriptive norms regarding victim-blaming. For example, an adaptation of the self-presentation paradigm could ask participants to complete a victim-blaming questionnaire in the way they expect that most people would. Similarly, the judge's paradigm might be modified to ask participants to estimate how common a particular response is.

A notable limitation of these studies is the large number of participants who did not complete the studies as instructed. Despite this limitation, the general pattern of results was largely the same when participants who did not follow the instructions were excluded from analysis. This limitation could be addressed by modifying the current methods. With respect to the self-presentation paradigm, it is possible that participants were hesitant to respond to a victim-blaming questionnaire in a way that either presented themselves in a negative light or deviated too far from their own perspective. For example, when asked for feedback on the study, one participant reported, *"This study made me think and a little bit uncomfortable because of how I had to respond."* This might be remedied by asking participants to respond to the questionnaire from a third person perspective. That is, instead of asking participants to complete the questionnaire in a way to get others to like them, they might be asked to complete it in a way that

another person would if he/she was trying to make a good impression on others. Another option might be to ask the participant to respond to the questionnaire twice: once in terms of their own beliefs and then in a way to present themselves in a certain light.

In terms of the judge's paradigm, participants may have had difficulty separating their evaluations of the ostensible prior participant from their perceptions of the victim herself. This is evidenced by the response of a participant after being asked who he/she had evaluated in the study, *"A mixture of both, taking into account both person's personalities and inputs."* Future studies might ask participants to appraise both the evaluation target, as well as the victim or to indicate the extent to which most people would approve of the given responses.

Alternatively, these issues might be explained by a simple failure to completely read and understand the instructions. While instructions were reiterated to the participant several times, participants are accustomed to completing questionnaires from their own perspective, rather than with a specific and explicit motivation. For example, one participant in the pilot reported, *"It was sort of hard for me to answer in a way that made me likeable instead of just honest at first."* Further, evaluating a third party based on his/her responses to questionnaire is likely a new experience. While efforts were made at the start of each session to ensure that participants understood the instructions (e.g., research assistants were asked to read aloud a script describing the tasks and what participants were being asked to do prior the start of the study), in the future other steps might be taken to ensure participants understand the task. For example, after reviewing

the study instructions, participants might take a brief quiz to indicate that they understand the task. Although participants would, no doubt, find this process tedious, it could potentially ensure that they complete the study as intended.

Despite some limitations, this research provides several additional potential avenues for future investigations regarding social norms surrounding victim-blaming. First, it suggests a need for more qualitative responses into victim-blaming. Allowing participants an opportunity to freely respond to both scenarios involving victimization or to the responses of a third party can serve to contextualize and enrich data that is provided by more typical Likert-type measures. These qualitative responses have the potential to offer illuminating information regarding the complex, and sometimes conflicting, responses people may have to victims and their situations. For example, one recurring theme in participant free responses rejected victim-blaming, while simultaneously invoking ideas of personal responsibility. For example, one participant commented, *"It is not her fault she was sexually assaulted. There is a possibility she was flirty and should have been more conservative but when a girl says no she should not be ignored, especially when it comes to sexual activity"* (Study 2). Another reported, *"While the assault was not her fault in any way, she could have avoided the situation by not going upstairs or even not going to the party"* (Study 4). Examining qualitative responses to controversial or difficult topics such as these may be an effective method of exploring the prevalence of victim-blaming attitudes and beliefs. Moreover, these methods may uncover the conflict that may arise when participants attempt to respond in

socially desirable ways, but are also inclined to hold victims, at least partially, responsible.

Second, it is important to investigate whether these patterns of responses generalize to victims from different backgrounds or across different types of victim scenarios. Future research should also address whether the role of race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, or other group identities might influence the extent to which these norms are applied. Prior research suggests that sexual assault is evaluated as less severe when it is experienced by Black women. Further, Black women who have survived sexual assault are less likely to be believed and tend to be blamed more for their assault (Donovan, 2007). Thus, prescriptive norms against victim-blaming may not apply equally to women of all backgrounds. Furthermore, there is a great deal of media attention directed towards sexual assault. This relatively recent awareness may be driving prescriptive norms against victim-blaming and it is unclear whether negative evaluations of victims in other scenarios (e.g., poverty, police brutality) are perceived as victim-blaming in the wider population. The current findings could be extended by examining whether there are social norms regarding victim-blaming in other situations and if these patterns are similar to those found here.

7.2 Implications

While it is clear that victim-blaming is perceived as undesirable and counter-normative, these studies were not designed to examine what, if any, ramifications might occur as a result of norm violation. As prescriptive norms are aligned with broad social values, individuals who disregard these norms are often subject to some form of social

sanction (Alves & Correia, 2010; Cialdini et al., 1990; Reno et al., 1993). Exploring behavioral responses to the violation of these norms might give insight into the importance placed upon them. Interestingly, Study 5 provides preliminary evidence that engaging in victim-blaming may not always lead to severe consequences. Results found that victim-blaming had a larger effect on a candidate who was not particularly qualified. In contrast, for a high-quality candidate, engaging in victim-blaming did decrease evaluations of suitability, but not to the same extent. Moreover, ratings of suitability for well qualified, but high victim-blaming candidates remained above the scale midpoint. This suggests that if an individual is highly qualified, violation social norms, at least for victim-blaming, may not be a deal breaker.

The results of this research extend our knowledge of when and why victim-blaming may occur. Prior research suggests that victim-blaming occurs as a response to either a threat to personal safety (e.g., "If it could happen to her, it could happen to me) or to worldview (e.g., "If these types of events happen, maybe the world isn't so predictable."). In contrast, a social norms perspective investigates whether there are additional cultural and societal factors that might guide how we evaluate and attempt to explain circumstances in which someone is victimized. How we think about individuals who engage in victim-blaming or endorse negative attitudes towards victims can tell us whether victim-blaming has social value and, if so, the type(s) of social value it holds (e.g., desirability, utility).

There are also implications for both interventions and educational programs regarding victimization and sexual assault. These findings suggest that victim-blaming

is generally negatively received: it is not seen as a particularly appropriate response to victims. This may suggest a changing climate in terms of how we think about and evaluate victims and their situations. With continuing media attention to victimization and education programs (e.g., the Center for Disease Control's Rape Prevention and Education Program; Texas A&M's Step In Stand Up Program), individuals may be attempting to empathize more with victims. This work suggests that researchers and educators interested in addressing the prevalence of victim-blaming should also consider that due to social desirability, victim-blaming may take more subtle forms and that individuals may have difficulty identifying attitudes or behaviors that reinforce negative evaluations of victims. Thus, information provided during these interventions needs to clearly demonstrate the negative impact that these subtle, ambiguous forms of victim-blaming may have on victims. While the studies herein did not find evidence that victim-blaming is descriptively normative, it does provide a starting point and useful information for the design of future investigations.

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APPENDIX A

STUDY INSTRUCTIONS [PILOT, STUDY 1]

Instructions for the Control Condition:

PLEASE READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS CAREFULLY

On the following page, you will be presented with a short description of an individual and an event in his/her life. Afterwards, we would like for you to evaluate the person and the situation.

Instructions for the Norm Conditions

PLEASE READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS CAREFULLY

This study is a little bit different than most studies that you have completed before. On the following page, you will be presented with a short description of an individual and an event in his/her life. Afterwards, we would like for you to evaluate the person and the situation.

Likeable Condition:

However, instead of answering according to your perspective, we would like for you to respond to the questions in a way that conveys a positive image of yourself. **That is, please fill out the questions in the way that you would if you were attempting to get the person who was going to read your answers to *like* and *approve* of you.**

Unlikeable Condition:

However, instead of answering according to your perspective, we would like for you to respond to the questions in a way that conveys a negative image of yourself. **That is, please fill out the questions in the way that you would if you were attempting to get the person who was going to read your answers to *dislike* and *disapprove* of you.**

Competent Condition:

However, instead of answering according to your perspective, we would like for you to respond to the questions in a way that conveys a competent image of yourself. **That is, please fill out the questions in the way that you would if you were attempting to get the person who was going to read your answers to perceive you as *competent, effective, and efficient.***

Incompetent Condition:

However, instead of answering according to your perspective, we would like for you to respond to the questions in a way that conveys an incompetent image of yourself. **That is, please fill out the questions in the way that you would if you were attempting to get the person who was going to read your answers to perceive you as *incompetent, ineffective, and inefficient.***

APPENDIX B

VICTIM-BLAMING VIGNETTE

CRIME ALERT: Off-campus sexual assault reported

DATE: November 12, 2012

SUBJECT: Off-campus sexual assault

Campus crime alerts and timely warnings to the community comply with the federal Jeanne Clery Disclosure of Campus Security Policy and Campus Crime Statistics Act (Clery Act).

On November 12, 2012, the Campus Police Department was notified by the local police department of a sexual assault that occurred in their city at approximately 11:45 pm on Saturday, November 10.

A student reported to the police department that she had been sexually assaulted while at a party with friends Saturday evening (Nov. 10). The victim told authorities that she met the suspect while at the party and after chatting for several hours, agreed to go upstairs to 'continue talking.' After entering an upstairs bedroom, the suspect locked the door and began to remove the victim's clothing. The victim reported that she attempted to leave the room, but was pinned down and sexually assaulted.

The identity of the suspect in the case is known and the police department is investigating.

Students are always encouraged to provide campus and city police with any information that might aid in solving a crime.

APPENDIX C

VICTIM-BLAMING MEASURES [PILOT, STUDY 1]

ADAPTED FROM GOLDENBERG & FORGAS (2012) AND HAFER (2000B)

Blame/Responsibility

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

1. She is responsible for what happened.
2. She could have avoided the assault.
3. She had control over being assaulted
4. I feel sorry for her.
5. She could have prevented the assault.
6. Her behavior is responsible for the assault.
7. She is to blame for the assault.
8. I believe what happened to her was caused by her own behavior
9. I believe she is responsible herself for what happened.
10. I think she deserved what happened to her.

Derogation

The woman described in the report is…

1.	Intelligent	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Unintelligent
2.	Competent	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Incompetent
3.	Likeable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Unlikeable
4.	Responsible	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Irresponsible
5.	Careful	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Careless
6.	Honest	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Dishonest
7.	Modest	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Arrogant

What is your overall impression of the woman described in the report?

	Extremely Positive	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Extremely Negative

Dissociation

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

1. I would consider hanging out with this person.
2. I would consider studying or working with this person.
3. I would consider partying with this person.
4. In general, I identify with this person.
5. This incident could happen to me or a close friend.

6. In general, I am similar to this person

Do you have any other comments that you'd like to share about the woman described in the story or the incident?

APPENDIX D

MANIPULATION CHECKS

Manipulation Check [Pilot, Study 1]

When you responded to the questions about the person described in the report, how did you respond?

1. In a way to make the person who would read my answers **like** and **approve** of me
2. In a way to make the person who would read my answers **dislike** and **disapprove** of me.
3. In a way to make the person who would read my answers see me as **competent** and **effective [STUDY 1]**
4. In a way to make the person who would read my answers see me as **incompetent** and **ineffective [STUDY 1]**
5. The way that the **average** person would.
6. The way that **I felt** about the victim and her situation.
7. In no particular way.

Manipulation Check [Study 2, Study 3]

When you completed the questionnaire, were you evaluating the person described in the report or the person who filled out the questionnaire?

APPENDIX E

FREE WILL AND DETERMINISM SCALE

(FAD-PLUS; PAULHUS & CAREY, 2011) [PILOT, STUDY 1]

Instructions:
[Experimental Conditions: While earlier in the study you were asked to respond to questions in a particular way, we would like for your honest response for the remaining questions.]

We'd like you to answer a few questions about yourself. Read each of the following statements and decide how much you agree with each according to your attitudes, beliefs and experiences.
There are no right or wrong answers here. Your first responses are usually the most accurate.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

1. I believe that the future has already been determined by fate. *(Fatalistic Determinism)*
2. People's biological makeup determines their talents and personality. *(Scientific Determinism)*
3. Chance events seem to be the major cause of human history. *(Unpredictability)*
4. People have complete control over the decisions they make. *(Free Will)*
5. No matter how hard you try, you can't change your destiny. *(Fatalistic Determinism)*
6. Psychologists and psychiatrists will eventually figure out all human behavior. *(Scientific Determinism)*
7. No one can predict what will happen in this world. *(Unpredictability)*
8. People must take full responsibility for any bad choices they make. *(Free Will)*
9. Fate already has a plan for everyone. *(Fatalistic Determinism)*
10. Your genes determine your future. *(Scientific Determinism)*
11. Life seems unpredictable—just like throwing dice or flipping a coin. *(Unpredictability)*
12. People can overcome any obstacles if they truly want to. *(Free Will)*
13. Whatever will be, will be—there's not much you can do about it. *(Fatalistic Determinism)*
14. Science has shown how your past environment created your current intelligence and personality. *(Scientific Determinism)*
15. People are unpredictable. *(Unpredictability)*
16. Criminals are totally responsible for the bad things they do. *(Free Will)*
17. Whether people like it or not, mysterious forces seem to move their lives. *(Fatalistic Determinism)*

18. As with other animals, human behavior always follows the laws of nature. *(Scientific Determinism)*
19. Life is hard to predict because it is almost totally random. *(Unpredictability)*
20. Luck plays a big role in people's lives. *(Unpredictability)*
21. People have complete free will. *(Free Will)*
22. Parents' character will determine the character of their children. *(Scientific Determinism)*
23. People are always at fault for their bad behavior. *(Free Will)*
24. Childhood environment will determine your success as an adult. *(Scientific Determinism)*
25. What happens to people is a matter of chance. *(Unpredictability)*
26. Strength of mind can always overcome the body's desires. *(Free Will)*
27. People's futures cannot be predicted. *(Unpredictability)*

APPENDIX F

RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN AMBIVALENT SEXISM AND VICTIM-BLAMING [STUDY 1]

In order to examine if hostile or benevolent sexism differentially influenced victim-blaming between conditions, Study 2 additionally asked participants to complete the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory. The Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (ASI; Glick & Fisk, 1996) asks participants to indicate their agreement with 22 statements which reflect two independent, but related, forms of sexism. The first, hostile sexism, (HS; α=.86, *M*=3.71, *SD*=1.04) measures antipathy towards women (e.g., "women are too easily offended"). The second, benevolent sexism (BS; α=.77, *M*=3.99, *SD*=.87), measures the extent to which individuals perceive women positively, but sympathetically. BS stresses adherence to gender stereotypes or gender roles (e.g., "women should be cherished and protected by men"). Responses were given on a 7-point scale, where higher scores indicated greater endorsement of hostile or benevolent sexism.

To examine these relationships, bivariate correlations were conducted to examine the relationship between hostile sexism and benevolent sexism and victim-blaming separately for each condition (see table below). Interestingly, hostile sexism appeared to be positively related to victim-blaming in both the control and when presenting in a positive way (i.e., when presenting as likeable or competent). However, when presenting in a negative way (i.e., when presenting as unlikeable or incompetent), it was negatively associated with victim-blaming. Benevolent sexism was also positively correlated with attribution of responsibility and dissociation, but only when participants were asked to respond in a way to appear competent. Together, these results suggest that beliefs about women may shift perceptions of appropriate and effective evaluations of victims. Individuals higher in hostile sexism, and to a lesser extent benevolent sexism, may perceive higher levels of victim-blaming as more appropriate and desirable.

Correlations between hostile sexism, benevolent sexism, and victim-blaming, Study 1

Condition	Responsibility	Derogation	Dissociation
Overall			
Hostile Sexism	.11†	.04	.03
Benevolent Sexism	.08	.03	.06
Control			
Hostile Sexism	.35*	.35*	.22
Benevolent Sexism	.19	-.002	.20
Likeable			
Hostile Sexism	.31**	.13	.16
Benevolent Sexism	.18	.10	.10
Unlikeable			
Hostile Sexism	-.26†	-.24†	-.35*

Unlikeable	Responsibility	Derogation	Dissociation
Benevolent Sexism	.11	-.01	-.08
Competent			
Hostile Sexism	.59**	.45**	.59**
Benevolent Sexism	.33**	.19	.35**
Incompetent			
Hostile Sexism	-.15	-.35**	-.44**
Benevolent Sexism	-.05	-.03	.07

† $p \leq .093$
* $p < .05$
** $p < .01$

APPENDIX G

STUDY INSTRUCTIONS [STUDY 2, STUDY 3]

In this study, we are interested in people's first impressions when reading about events and how we go about forming impressions of others.

You will read a short description of an event that occurred in someone's life. After reading about the event, you will see how another individual (the respondent) evaluated the person described. We would like to learn about your impressions of the respondent based on how he/she responded to the questionnaire. **That is, we are interested in your impression of the respondent (the person who completed the questionnaire), not the person described in the story.**

APPENDIX H

VICTIM-BLAMING MANIPULATION [STUDY 2, STUDY 3, STUDY 4]

Instructions [Study 2, Study 3]:
In an earlier version of this study, we asked individuals to evaluate the person described in the story you just read. We would like for you to review one of the completed questionnaires and form an impression of the person based on his/her answers.

On your desk is a packet containing the evaluation. Please take a moment to think about how the person responded to the questionnaires and then answer the questions below.

<u>High victim-blaming condition:</u>

We'd like for you to think about what you just read. Specifically, we'd like for you think about the woman described in the report and the incident. For the questions below, please evaluate the woman in terms of how responsible she is for the incident.

	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Somewhat Disagree	4 Neither Agree nor Disagree	5 Somewhat Agree	6 Agree	7 Strongly Agree
She is responsible for what happened.						X	
She could have avoided the assault.							X
She had control over being assaulted.						X	
I feel sorry for her.					X		
She could have prevented the assault.					X		
Her behavior is responsible for the assault.							X
She is to blame for the assault.						X	
I believe what happened to her was caused by her own behavior.							X
I believe that she is responsible herself for what happened.					X		
I think she deserved what happened to her.				X			

We'd like for you to continue to think about what you read. Now, we'd like for you to evaluate her as a person.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Unintelligent		X						*Intelligent*
Incompetent			X					*Competent*
Unlikeable			X					*Likeable*
Irresponsible	X							*Responsible*
Careless	X							*Careful*
Dishonest			X					*Honest*
Arrogant				X				*Modest*

Overall, what kind of impression do you get from this person?

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Extremely Negative		X						*Extremely Positive*

We'd like for you to continue to think about what you read. This time, we'd like for you to think about how similar you are to the woman described in the report.

	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Somewhat Disagree	4 Neither Agree nor Disagree	5 Somewhat Agree	6 Agree	7 Strongly Agree
In general, I am similar to this person.		X					
In general, I identify with this person.	X						
This incident could happen to me or a close friend.			X				
I would like to meet this person.			X				
I would consider hanging out with this person.			X				
I would consider studying or working with this person.				X			
I would consider partying with this person.		X					

Moderate victim-blaming condition:

We'd like for you to think about what you just read. Specifically, we'd like for you think about the woman described in the report and the incident. For the questions below, please evaluate the woman in terms of how responsible she is for the incident.

	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Somewhat Disagree	4 Neither Agree nor Disagree	5 Somewhat Agree	6 Agree	7 Strongly Agree
She is responsible for what happened.				X			
She could have avoided the assault.				X			
She had control over being assaulted.					X		
I feel sorry for her.			X				
She could have prevented the assault.					X		
Her behavior is responsible for the assault.		X					
She is to blame for the assault.					X		
I believe what happened to her was caused by her own behavior.			X				
I believe that she is responsible herself for what happened.				X			
I think she deserved what happened to her.				X			

We'd like for you to continue to think about what you read. Now, we'd like for you to evaluate her <u>as a person</u>.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Unintelligent					X			*Intelligent*
Incompetent				X				*Competent*
Unlikeable					X			*Likeable*
Irresponsible				X				*Responsible*
Careless			X					*Careful*
Dishonest					X			*Honest*
Arrogant				X				*Modest*

Overall, what kind of impression do you get from this person?

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Extremely Negative				X				*Extremely Positive*

We'd like for you to continue to think about what you read. This time, we'd like for you to think about how similar you are to the woman described in the report.

	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Somewhat Disagree	4 Neither Agree nor Disagree	5 Somewhat Agree	6 Agree	7 Strongly Agree
In general, I am similar to this person.				X			
In general, I identify with this person.			X				
This incident could happen to me or a close friend.					X		
I would like to meet this person.			X				
I would consider hanging out with this person.					X		
I would consider studying or working with this person.						X	
I would consider partying with this person.				X			

Low victim-blaming condition:

We'd like for you to think about what you just read. Specifically, we'd like for you think about the woman described in the report and the incident. For the questions below, please evaluate the woman in terms of how responsible she is for the incident.

	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Somewhat Disagree	4 Neither Agree nor Disagree	5 Somewhat Agree	6 Agree	7 Strongly Agree
She is responsible for what happened.	X						
She could have avoided the assault.		X					
She had control over being assaulted.		X					
I feel sorry for her.						X	
She could have prevented the assault.		X					
Her behavior is responsible for the assault.			X				
She is to blame for the assault.	X						
I believe what happened to her was caused by her own behavior.		X					
I believe that she is responsible herself for what happened.		X					
I think she deserved what happened to her.	X						

We'd like for you to continue to think about what you read. Now, we'd like for you to evaluate her as a person.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Unintelligent					X			*Intelligent*
Incompetent						X		*Competent*
Unlikeable							X	*Likeable*
Irresponsible						X		*Responsible*
Careless					X			*Careful*
Dishonest							X	*Honest*
Arrogant						X		*Modest*

Overall, what kind of impression do you get from this person?

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Extremely Negative						X		*Extremely Positive*

We'd like for you to continue to think about what you read. This time, we'd like for you to think about how similar you are to the woman described in the report.

	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Somewhat Disagree	4 Neither Agree nor Disagree	5 Somewhat Agree	6 Agree	7 Strongly Agree
In general, I am similar to this person.						X	
In general, I identify with this person.					X		
This incident could happen to me or a close friend.							X
I would like to meet this person.				X			
I would consider hanging out with this person.						X	
I would consider studying or working with this person.						X	
I would consider partying with this person.					X		

APPENDIX I

DEPENDENT MEASURES [STUDY 2, STUDY 3]

FISK, CUDDY, & GLICK, 2007; FISK, XU, CUDDY, & GLICK, 1999

Thinking about the respondent as a person, please indicate the extent to which each trait describes the respondent.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

The respondent is…

1. Ambitious
2. Cold
3. Industrious
4. Nice
5. Competent
6. Good-natured
7. Intelligent
8. Kind
9. Competitive
10. Helpful
11. Lazy
12. Open
13. Confident
14. Honest
15. Naïve
16. Polite
17. Determined
18. Hypocritical
19. Persevering
20. Pretentious
21. Dynamic
22. Irritating
23. Responsible
24. Sincere
25. Hard-working
26. Likeable
27. Unstable
28. Tolerant

What is your overall impression of the respondent?

	1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	
Extremely Negative								*Extremely Positive*

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

1. I would consider hanging out with the respondent.
2. I would consider studying or working with the respondent.
3. I would consider partying with this respondent.
4. In general, I identify with the respondent.
5. This incident described in the vignette could happen to me or a close friend.
6. In general, I agree with the respondent's evaluation.

Do you have any other comments you'd like to share about the respondent?

Do you have any other comments you'd like to share about the person described in the story?

APPENDIX J

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS TO ACCOMPANY

VICTIM-BLAMING MANIPULATION [STUDY 3, STUDY 4]

High Victim-blaming Condition:
Comments:
The girl voluntarily went into the bedroom with this suspect. How is she not in some sort of way to blame?! Yes, she did not know this was going to happen, but she made the decision to go upstairs. I believe that she put herself into a situation that never has good outcomes. I don't think that anyone deserves something like that, but she did kind of ask for it.

Low Victim-blaming Condition:
Comments:
The girl voluntarily went into the bedroom with this suspect. But, she is not in any way to blame. She did not know this was going to happen, even though she made the decision to go upstairs. I believe that he put her into a situation that never has good outcomes. I don't think that anyone deserves something like that. She bears no responsibility for the incident.

APPENDIX K

DEMOGRAPHICS OF EVALUATION TARGET

Age: _18_

Gender: Female Male Prefer to say

Please indicate your race/ethnicity (select all that apply):

- ☐ Asian/Asian-American
- ☐ Black/African-American
- ☐ Latino/Hispanic
- ☐ Native American/American Indian
- ☒ White/Caucasian
- ☐ Not listed (please specify: _____)

Year in school:

- ☒ Freshman (1st year)
- ○ Sophomore (2nd year)
- ○ Junior (3rd year)
- ○ Senior (4th year or above)
- ○ Graduate Student

APPENDIX L

RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN AMBIVALENT SEXISM AND TARGET RATINGS [STUDY 3]

Study 3 additionally asked participants to complete the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (Glick & Fisk, 1996) in order to examine if ratings of targets were additionally influenced by either hostile (α=.90, M=3.60, SD=1.11) or benevolent sexism (α=.78, M=3.99, SD=.86). Bivariate correlations were conducted to examine the relationship between hostile sexism and benevolent sexism and victim-blaming separately for each condition. Results indicated that neither hostile sexism ($ps \geq .163$), nor benevolent sexism ($ps \geq .215$) were significantly related to liking or competence ratings in any of the conditions (see table below).

Correlations between victim-blaming, hostile sexism, and benevolent sexism, Study 3

	Condition			
	Low victim-blaming		High victim-blaming	
	Female target	Male target	Female target	Male target
Hostile sexism				
Liking	-.25	-.13	-.05	.22
Competence	-.10	-.22	.09	.21
Benevolent sexism				
Liking	.02	-.02	.19	.08
Competence	.22	-.13	-.25	.13

APPENDIX M

NOMINEE APPLICATION MATERIALS [STUDY 4]

Position Posting:

Nominations open for the Chief Justice of the TAMU Student Government Association The process for electing a new Chief Justice for the Texas A&M University Judicial Court is underway. Interested individuals should submit their application materials by Tuesday, May 3, 2016 at 5:00pm. Materials will be evaluated by officers in all three branches of the Texas A&M Student Government Association in the Summer of 2016. Vetted candidates will appear on the Fall 2016 ballot and will take office in Fall 2017.

About the Judicial Court: The Judicial Court is one of three branches of the Texas A&M University Student Government. The Judicial Court's duties include constitutional interpretation, legislative interpretation, election regulation, and conflict resolution as granted by the Student Government Association Constitution and the University Rules and Regulations. The Student Government Association Judicial Court shall have original jurisdiction extending to all cases arising under the Student Government Association Constitution and By-Laws and Student Senate legislation and to cases involving any member of the Student Government Association. Each student shall be protected by equal justice under the Student Government Association governing documents, and openness in all proceedings involving the Judicial Court.

Role of the Chief Justice: The Chief Justice is responsible for presiding over all hearings and meetings that the Judicial Court has. They are responsible for scheduling all hearings that the Court may have, as well as determines the time and place for them to be conducted. If requested the Chief Justice will call Pre-Trial Hearings, during which the Court will determine whether or not an appeal warrants an official Hearing. The Chief Justice attends all meetings and hearings of the Court as well as all Senate meetings. Appropriate candidates will take office upon receiving a nomination by a member of the student senate, approval by the Student Body President, and Confirmation by the Student Body President, and Confirmation by two-thirds of the Student Senate.

Nominee Resume (high quality):

JAMES GILB

EDUCATION:

Texas A&M University, College Station, TX *Expected May 2018*
B.A., Political Science, Pre-Law Track
Certificate in Foundations of Political Theory
GPA: 3.87

RELEVANT EXPERIENCE:

Texas A&M University, College Station, TX
Associate Justice, Texas A&M University Judicial Court 3/2016 – Present

- Attend judicial hearings
- Evaluate arguments from all parties involved in hearings in accordance with the Student Government Association Constitution and University Rules and Regulations
- Render an opinion regarding evidence and information given during judicial hearings

Texas A&M University, College Station Texas
Judicial Advocate, Texas A&M University Judicial Court 8/2015 – 3/2016

- Assist and provide counsel to students involved in judiciary hearings
- Prepare documentation, evidence, and arguments in judiciary hearings

COLLEGIATE AND COMMUNITY EXPERIENCE:

Texas A&M Historical Society 10/2014 – Present
Pre-Law Society, Texas A&M University 2/2015 – Present
Texas A&M Moot Court 8/2015 - Present
Pi Sigma Alpha, National Political Science Honor Society 3/2016 - Present

AWARDS AND HONORS:

University Honors Program, Texas A&M University 2014 - Present
Dean's Honor Roll, Texas A&M University 2014 – Present

Nominee Resume (low quality):

JAMES GILB

EDUCATION:

Texas A&M University, College Station, TX *Expected May 2018*
B.A., Political Science, Pre-Law Track
Certificate in Foundations of Political Theory
GPA: 2.87

RELEVANT EXPERIENCE:

HEB, College Station, TX
Cashier 10/2014 – Present

- Process customer payments by cash, debit, gift, and credit card
- Address any customer issues or complaints
- Ensure management of daily cash accounts
- Process exchanges and refunds

YMCA, Dallas, Texas
Referee for youth soccer 3/2011 – 6/2014

- Officiate matches according YMCA regulations
- Keep record of matches
- Insect sporting equipment to ensure compliance with safety regulations
- Attend referee training courses

COLLEGIATE AND COMMUNITY EXPERIENCE:

Texas A&M Historical Society 10/2014 – Present
Pre-Law Club, Texas A&M University 2/2015 – Present
Pi Sigma Alpha 3/2016 – Present

AWARDS AND HONORS:

Dean's Honor Roll, Texas A&M UniversitySpring, 2013

Distractor Situation:

SITUATION ONE

A woman was near death from cancer. One drug might save her, a form of radium that a druggist had recently discovered. The druggist was charging $2,000, ten times what the drug cost him to make. The sick woman's husband, Heinz, went to everyone he knew to borrow the money, but he could only get together about half of what it cost. He told the druggist that his wife was dying and asked him to sell it cheaper or let him to sell it cheaper or let him pay later. But the druggist said, "No." The husband got desperate and broke into the man's store to steal the drug for his wife.

We'd like for you to think about what you just read. Specifically, we'd like for you think about the man (Heinz) described in the report and the incident. For the questions below, please evaluate Heinz and his decision.

We'd like for you to think about what you just read. Specifically we'd like for you think about the man (Heinz) described in the report and the incident. For the questions below, please evaluate Heinz and his decision.

	1 Strongly Disagree	**2 Disagree**	**3 Somewhat Disagree**	**4 Neither Agree nor Disagree**	**5 Somewhat Agree**	**6 Agree**	**7 Strongly Agree**
Heinz should not have stolen the drug.						**X**	
Heinz had other options for medical treatment.			**X**				
Heinz had exhausted all of his options			**X**				
I feel sorry for Heinz.							**X**
Heinz made the most moral decision possible.						**X**	

We'd like for you to continue to think about Heinz. Now, we'd like for you to evaluate him <u>as a person.</u>

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Unintelligent						X		*Intelligent*
Incompetent					X			*Competent*
Unlikeable					X			*Likeable*
Irresponsible				X				*Responsible*
Careless			X					*Careful*
Dishonest				X				*Honest*
Arrogant					X			*Modest*

What is your overall impression of Heinz?

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Extremely Negative						X		*Extremely Positive*

We'd like for you to continue to think about what you read. This time, we'd like for you to think about how similar you are to Heinz.

	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Somewhat Disagree	4 Neither Agree nor Disagree	5 Somewhat Agree	6 Agree	7 Strongly Agree
In general, I am similar to this person.					X		
In general, I identify with this person.				X			
This incident could happen to me or a close friend.			X				
I would like to meet this person.					X		
I would consider hanging out with this person.					X		
I would consider studying or working with this person.					X		
I would consider partying with this person.				X			

Do you have any additional comments?

While Heinz's decision to steal the drug is understandable, I do not fully support his decision. I would like to have seen him attempt other options before breaking into the druggist's home. However, ultimately, life is far more valuable than money. Thus, if other options were not available, possible, or had been attempted, I believe that Heinz did the only thing that a reasonable person would do.

APPENDIX N

DEPENDENT MEASURES [STUDY 4]

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all			Unsure			Completely

1. How suitable do you think this potential nominee would be for the position of Chief Justice?
2. How successful do you think this potential nominee would be if he/she were elected to the position of Chief Justice?
3. How fair do you think this potential nominee is?
4. How reasonable do you think this potential nominee is?
5. How intelligent do you think the potential nominee is?
6. How competent do you think the potential nominee is?
7. Do you think this person makes good decisions?
8. Would you support the nomination of this person to the position of Chief Justice?

What additional comments do you have?